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THE
BRAZEN MASK.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



BY

MRS. CHARLOTTE PUTNEY,

AUTHOR OF CORA, &c.

As by degrees, from long, though gentle rains,
Great floods arise, and overflow the plains :
So men from little faults to great proceed,
Guilt grows on guilt, and crimes do crimes succeed. WANDESFORD.

VOL. I.



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THE

BRAZEN MASK.

IT was towards the close of evening, when the beams of a setting sun had gilded the surrounding scene, that Orlando had wandered amidst the rocks which project over the sea that divides the Canary Isles from Africa, to indulge, as usual, his deep-rooted melancholy. Neither the beauty of the expansive view, the refreshing coolness of a sea breeze, nor the clear musical notes of the little yellow-feathered songsters, that take their name from the island on which he stood, could yield a charm for him. As he leaned against the craggy precipice, and reflected on the baseness of his own species, he shuddered at the

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thought

thought of being called man!—"Strange," said he, "that a being so gifted with the powers of doing good, should, by perverting those endowments, debase himself below the meanest reptiles of the creation—and with fiend-like hatred, crush his fellow-mortal!"

A sigh interrupted his meditations; he paused—started—listened; when astonished he beheld a female form in a fissure of the rock close by him, clad in a loose robe, with a black ebony cross suspended from the waist: her wild flowing ringlets covered her neck; but as her head was supported by the whitest arm that limners ever fancied, he could not see her face.

Petrified he stood, when the stranger arose—and on discovering him, with a wild terrific shriek she fled, and was instantly out of sight. In vain he called, in vain he attempted to follow—her swiftness seemed like the wind; and after searching every where that anxious curiosity could pry into, he returned to the spot where he

he first discovered her. There was something in the sylph-like form of the fugitive, which brought to his mind a being who had long since been numbered with the blest. Till this moment he had no wish but to follow the pure spirit of his lost Adela; yet there was something so touching in the wildness of the beauteous creature who had fled his sight, that for the first time since his misfortunes had overwhelmed him, he was roused from the stupor which had sealed up his faculties. —“ Unfortunate being,” he cried, “ thou wouldst not fly me, didst thou know that. I am perhaps more wretched than thyself; and so far from injuring thee, I would pour into thy wounded mind the oil of compassion, and try to heal thy lacerated heart with the balm of pity.”

His susceptible soul was ever alive to the sufferings of others, and there was something peculiarly distressing in the deep sigh of the interesting stranger, which struck to the heart of Orlando. He was

incapable of love—save for that one object who he doubted not was waiting his arrival on the celestial shores : but yet he determined to befriend the fair unknown, and even to lose his life in her defence, should circumstances require it. He had not long to wait ere an opportunity occurred which put his fortitude to the test ; for he heard the shriek of her he had in vain attempted to follow—and at the same time beheld her fleeing along a precipice above him—then in a second she leaped the dreadful height, and lay motionless at his feet. He gently raised her ; but what were his sensations, when in the face of the sufferer he recognised features long since, as he thought, consigned to the tomb ! Could he believe his senses, or was he under some visionary influence, which presented to his imagination the form he loved to dwell on ? Was what he beheld real or ideal ?

While he endeavoured to collect his suspended faculties, still holding the beautiful

teous burden clasped close to his breast, animation gradually returned ; and opening her dark expressive eyes, she fixed them steadfastly on him ; then gazing with astonishment, started—and the mutual exclamations of—Orlando !—Adela !—burst from each heart at the same moment.

This then was no vision, and those only who have been buried to each other, can form an idea of the feelings which took possession of the enraptured pair. Each was the soul of the other, and as he burning kisses pressed, drank nectar from ruby lip. Explanation was impossible—tumultuous joy reigned alone, and repaid them for the past : but momentary was their ecstasy—for the trampling of mules round the base of the rock interrupted them, and Adela shrieked—“ They come, they come !”

Orlando had not time to inquire of whom she spoke, ere a gigantic figure in a brazen mask, mounted on a mule, advanced towards them, followed by a train of arm-

ed attendants. The chief ordered Orlando to draw, or surrender his charge.

“Death only shall separate us,” replied the latter, drawing his sabre; “but unmask, and let me see who it is that dare lay claim to Adela.”

“Orlando!” exclaimed the Mask, “thy doom is fixed;” and instantly aimed a blow at him, which the young man parried; then laying down his fainting fair, desired the chief to alight—and sword in hand fought over the senseless body of his Adela.

With equal skill, and equal rage, the contest long continued, till Orlando disarmed his antagonist—when one of the people belonging to the Brazen Mask darted round, and stabbed Orlando in the back. The dastard chief, to make victory more sure, recovered his sword, then plunged it in the breast of his fallen foe; and twice it drank the blood of Orlando, who seemed to expire without a groan.

Adela was by this time recovering from
her

her swoon, who just opened her eyes to see him fall ; and shrieking aloud, she said —“ *Save, oh save my child !*”

He heard no more, for his life’s blood flowed fast in many a purple stream, dying the earth around him—and all objects quickly receded from his sight. Adela hung over him in distracted agony—wrung her hands—tore her flowing ringlets, and in piteous accents implored Heaven to grant him life. The wearer of the brazen mask approaching, commanded his attendants to bear the beauteous mourner off.

“ Never,” she said, “ never shall you tear me from the remains of him I loved !”

Awe-struck, the slaves retreated a few paces, when the Mask exclaimed—“ Villains, do ye dare to disobey your master ?”

Irresolute they stood, for the situation of the unfortunate, defenceless female, had struck a spark of pity from their flinty hearts ; and they might have dared to shew compassion was not quite extinguished in their breasts, had they had any

other leader than he who commanded them.

“Obey!” vociferated the Mask, drawing his sword.

They all gathered round the sufferer, but stood apparently spellbound—for none had dared to lay his hand on her.

“Dastards!” exclaimed their chief, “your lives shall be the forfeit of this disobedience;” and striking them to the earth, seized on his wretched prey.

“Monster!” she said, and threw herself on the cold remains of her lost Orlando.

The demon tore her from this last embrace, threw her fainting on his beast, and mounting, ordered his slaves to precede him, fearing they might some of them stay behind, in order to give intelligence to any one who knew Adela, could they meet with such a person; but his fears were groundless, for she had lived almost sole tenant of those rocks for many a weary month. With reluctance they all obeyed, and with savage satisfaction he galloped

galloped off, bearing with him her whose form was symmetry, and whose eye shed lustre on those on whom it beamed.

Night had now spread her sable curtain over the horrid scene, where lay the stiffened, mangled form of Orlando; but life was not extinct, and he began gradually to recover. He laid, trying to recollect whether the occurrences so lately passed were real, or only the work of fancy: if indeed he had found his Adela, how could she be alive, when he had seen her dead?—or supposing her to be alive, how came she there? He might have lain for years confounding himself with conjecture, had he not attempted to move, when the pain and stiffness of his wounds convinced him all was not ideal. He again grew faint from the exertion, when the cries of an infant recalled his fleeting senses: he remembered the last words of Adela were—*“Save, oh save my child!”* Was this then the cry of her offspring?—“Oh God,” he ejaculated, “enable me to rise!”

His prayer was short, but fervent; and he once more tried, but in vain. The crying of the little suppliant continued, and darkness surrounded him; though if he could have arisen, it would have been impossible to have found the object of his wishes. Prayer was the only effort he could make, and he lay listening to the plaintive entreaties of the infant, which at intervals broke upon his ear, but which grew weaker and weaker. At length Aurora painted the horizon with golden streaks, and clad in a robe of purple, came on fast advancing, whilst Sol with acquiescence shed his beams around.

The glittering dew which sparkled on the grass first attracted his attention; and stretching out his hand, he moistened his parched lips with the pearly drops, which seemed to give him new life; and raising his head, looked around in search of the object of his anxious desire, but could nowhere discern any thing of the kind.—

“If,” thought he, “there is a Superior
Power

Power (and that there is, each weed proclaims aloud)—if the unprovoked malice of my enemies is not always to rage against me—if I am not totally an outcast from Providence—if my temporal sufferings are not now to close for ever—if I have not sinned beyond the reach of mercy, then may the great Disposer of events grant me this one request—that I may be enabled to relieve the wants of this little inheritor of calamity, this plaintive sufferer, formed by thine his creative hand!" As he earnestly made this last request, he raised his eyes, when they were suddenly attracted by something in the tree, which spread its thick foliage above him. At the same moment he heard another faint appeal from the object of his anxiety, when he said to himself—"It is—it must be there!"

With difficulty he crawled to the base of the tree, but to raise himself seemed impossible; when collecting all the strength he possessed, and placing one arm round

the trunk, he by degrees pulled himself up, and with the other hand took a basket, made of small twigs, which hung on one of the lowest branches, and on opening it, beheld a lovely, dimpled boy, who held out his little arms, and in short, impatient cries, implored for that sustenance which he had been so long deprived of.

What a situation was Orlando's! He saw the loveliest inhabitant of this miserable vale of suffering on the brink of the grave for want of nutriment, yet he had none to give him; and that child was perhaps his own! Maddened at the thought, he would have resigned his life, nor thought the sacrifice too great, so that he could but save the offspring of his adored Adela. Language cannot depict his feelings, which, together with the exertions he had just made, so far overpowered him, that clasping the babe to his breast, he sunk again into insensibility.

In this situation he remained some time, when once more unclosing his eyes, he
fixed

fixed them on the venerable figure of an anchorite, who was bending over him, in anxious solicitude, and motioning with his hand for Orlando not to speak, took from his pouch a cordial, which he presented to him, who with gratitude swallowed the welcome draught, but left some of it in the bottle, and pointed to the infant. The old man understood him, and mixing with it a few drops of water which he had in a cruise, gave it to his little patient, who presently fell into a sweet sleep.

Orlando suffered his kind friend to proceed his own way, who washed the clotted blood from his wounds, and dressed them with the utmost care; but on examining one which had been torn open in reaching the child from the tree, he found it in a much worse state than the rest; for the anguish occasioned by severing the lips of the wound asunder, increased the inflammation to a violent degree. The good man acted according to the best of his judgment, and finding it impossible to remove
his

his patient, pulled off his own cloak, spread it over him, then feeling his pulse, gave him a second draught, squeezed his hand in token of friendship, and taking up the child, was going away.

“No, no!” exclaimed Orlando, which were the first words that had passed between them.

“My son,” said the hermit, “your recovery, next to God, depends on yourself, which is the reason I have hitherto remained silent, that I might not induce you to exert yourself by speaking. Trust the child to me, and I will bring it back to you in the morning.”

“It will be death to me to part with him,” replied Orlando; and pointing to the tree, motioned to the old man to leave him there, thinking that place the most secure which maternal fondness had found out for him.

“Then be it so,” answered the hermit; “for after what I have given him, he will not require refreshment till to-morrow;”
and

and was placing the infant in his usual cradle, when Orlando motioned to him with an expressive look, which he could not misunderstand; and he held the child to Orlando, who impressed his first paternal kiss on its lovely face, and, for aught he knew, it was the last; while a big tear strolled from his eye, as he slowly ejaculated—"Oh God, protect him!"

The anchorite having examined the basket, saw a dove had nestled in one corner of it, which flew out for a few minutes in quest of food, and then returned to the basket, to the surprise of the hermit, who let it remain, placing the child and cradle in the tree; then turning to Orlando, said—"My son, my prayers shall not be wanting in your behalf; nor would I leave you to-night, if I had those things necessary for your unfortunate situation: but my habitation is some distance from here, and you cannot at present be moved; therefore I leave you to the care of Heaven, and will return to you in the morning."

"Oh,

“ Oh, father !” said Orlando——

“ Peace, my son !” interrupted the old man, and waving his hand, silently took his leave.

It was near the close of day, much about the same time that Orlando first heard the sigh of Adela, while he was leaning against the rock ; and he reflected with amazement, on the many strange incidents which had crowded on him within the last four-and-twenty hours, when an uncommon weight oppressed his eyelids, and sealed his sorrows in oblivion.

Morn had risen into day ere the slumbers of Orlando were broken, when starting, he awoke, and beheld the hermit seated by him, with the infant in his lap, whom he was feeding, and who, with eager haste, was devouring the welcome repast his aged nurse had brought him.

“ How fares it with my friend ?” asked the hermit, on perceiving his patient stir.

“ Better than I can describe,” he replied ;

plied; "oh, father, teach me a language to express my thanks!"

"No more on that subject," said the recluse, and laying the child in the basket, administered some refreshment; but he gently put it aside with his hand, saying—"The sight of the child will do me more good."

"Not so, my son," said his friend; "I do not wish your feelings to be agitated at present; and as I am both doctor and nurse, must be allowed my own way."

"You shall, my preserver," Orlando observed; and after taking the nourishment presented, found himself refreshed.

His attendant proceeded to dress his wounds, which he found in a more favourable state than could have been expected in so short a time, particularly that which had been forced open on account of the child, about which he was most apprehensive, and with a smile said—"The uncommon change in your favour authorizes me to grant your request;" then
raising

raising him up, seated him so that he could lean against the tree, and taking the infant out of the basket, placed it in the arms of Orlando.

He silently contemplated his features for some minutes, when a violent paroxysm of grief burst from him, and shook his whole frame.—“This is what I feared,” said the hermit.

The cause was, that the infant resembled no one but his mother: the same speaking eye, the same ruby lip, the same beautiful hair, the same round polished limbs—in short, it was Adela’s self in miniature.

The innocent, like a cherub, smiled, and called Orlando to himself again: he pressed it to his heart, exclaiming—“Nature tells me that thou art, indeed thou art, my child!”

“This excess of feeling will retard your recovery, my son,” observed the anchorite.

“Probably you never knew what it was to be a father?” said Orlando.

“Would

“Would to God I never had!” replied the hermit, and with unsteady steps walked out of sight; but shortly after returned more composed.

In the course of the day he brought a mattress for his patient, with whatever comforts his little store afforded, and staid with him till he was able to walk; during which time Orlando would lay for hours contemplating the features of the child, and then place him in the tree.

The hermit, finding his patient much better, proposed removing to his habitation, which he heard with reluctance, but could not refuse.—“I know your motive, and cannot blame you, my son,” said the old man.

His reasons were, he was loth to quit the spot where he had last beheld his Adela, and where he had first seen his boy.

The little family travelled slowly on, owing to the extreme weakness of Orlando, and entered a wood, whose thick foliage almost excluded the rays of the sun.

In

In the centre of the forest stood the cave of the hermit; the entrance was concealed by the thickness of the underwood, and the hermit leading the way, welcomed his unhappy guest.—“Here at least, my friend, you will be free from the persecutions of man,” he said—“here you can, without interruption, worship the Creator—and here we will share the delight of rearing your beloved boy.”

Orlando pressed his hand, but felt too much to speak.

The entrance to the cave was a gradual descent, which opened into a spacious square room, dug out of the earth, at the upper end of which was a table, with a crucifix, rosary, and missal. There were several little comforts which Orlando did not expect to find; the hermit relieved him by saying—“Do not suppose you will be a burden to me, if you was to remain here all your life; for I have given so largely to the neighbouring convent, that they supply all my wants, and in-
dolge

dulge my peculiarities, by never asking a question."

Orlando bowed his thanks, but seemed buried in his own grief, which his friend observing, said—"My son, you must endeavour to cheer up, for you will contribute to my happiness by trying to regain your health."

"Alas, father, my loss is greater than I can bear!" replied Orlando.

"Not so, my son; the sooner you recover, the sooner you will be able to regain that loss," said the old man.

The thought reanimated his patient, who from that hour rapidly amended; and the hermit, to engage his attention, related his own history, as follows:—

HISTORY OF ACASTO, DUKE OF ANDALUSIA.

"I am Acasto, duke of Andalusia; my family could boast of being allied to the blood-royal of Spain, and gave place to none for ancestry, honour, or wealth. I

mention

mention these things (which to me are trifles now), because the nobility of Spain pride themselves much upon their high descent. The duke, my father, was not behind the proudest of them, in giving way to the punctilio so justly attributed to our countrymen.

We were often disturbed with invasions from the African coast, when I frequently accompanied my father in his excursions to quell these troublesome neighbours. On one of these occasions we had driven them back, and in our own vessels crossed that part of the sea which is called the Strait, and landed on their side the water, when a desperate battle ensued. Victory was a long time doubtful, but owing to the obstinate valour of my father and his troops, it was declared on our side.

In the midst of the engagement I observed an African chief, who dealt slaughter round him, though he was wounded in several places; and one of our people
aimed

aimed a blow at him, which I warded off, exclaiming—"Hold! your antagonist is already wounded." The transaction so struck the young chief, that he instantly dismounted, and surrendered himself my prisoner, laying his arms at my feet. As one generous action commonly produces another, I vowed eternal friendship to him, which was never broken to the day of his death.

I procured his freedom, and peace being once more restored, we returned to our domain, accompanied by my young friend Alvaro, the African, who was much pleased with an invitation to our chateau. My father behaved towards him with more urbanity than I expected, considering he was of Moorish descent; but Alvaro, by surrendering, had acknowledged my father victorious, who had too high a sense of honour to treat a conquered foe otherwise than with generosity.

The more I saw of Alvaro, the more I had cause to esteem him: he was artless,
brave,

brave, ingenuous, sincere—in short, he possessed every virtue that could form the warrior and the friend. Our time flew as on the wings of the wind, for it was dedicated to friendship; but, alas! our happiness was interrupted by the machinations of envy. Sebastian, a distant kinsman of my father, saw, with jealous eye, the increasing attachment between us, and sought to destroy it.

Sebastian, as I then supposed him to be, was artful, cowardly, hypocritical, subtle—in short, he possessed every vice that could form the villain. He had so far disguised his real character as to obtain the good opinion of my father, who placed the utmost confidence in him, and had appointed him my successor to the family estates, provided I died without male issue. He endeavoured to impress my father with the idea, that it was dangerous for a Spaniard to form a friendship with one of Moorish extraction; and averred that Alvaro was gaining all the intelligence
he

he could respecting our situation, resources, and fortifications.

The duke, with the true pride of an old Spaniard, rejected these insinuations; but from that time, wished I had found a bosom friend on this side the water.

I laboured, and succeeded in clearing Alvaro from the imputations so unjustly attributed to him, when the duke replied —“ My son, I have no doubt but your friend is as innocent as you wish me to believe him; but it does not look well for one of the first families, so nearly allied to the king as ours is, to take to their confidence one of his avowed enemies; for such you know the Africans are. I do not insist that you should break with your friend, nor in any way wound his feelings; but I had rather he was landed on his own coast.”

I left my father with a heavy heart, but could not blame him, for I felt the justness of his remarks. The duke had occasion to go to a distant part of the province on the following day, when Alvaro and I accom-

panied him, attended by some of our retinue. We had journied some miles, when on entering a wood, as my friend was gaily conversing with my father, they were attacked by a number of banditti, headed by a man in a brazen mask."

"A brazen mask!" exclaimed Orlando.

"Peace, my son, and let me continue my story," said the hermit.

"Alvaro saw their chief aim was at my father; for the wearer of the mask fought only with the duke; when with the quickness so natural to the Africans, he threw himself between the Mask and my father, receiving the poniard in his own breast which was aimed at the life of the duke. I came up just at this moment, and saw my friend weltering in his blood. Judge of my feelings, when I found he had presented his own life to preserve my father's! I loved him with enthusiasm before, but could not now describe my sensations. Our retinue came in sight, and the banditti seeing our number exceeded theirs, immediately

immediately disappeared; for I should have told you, that my father and Alvaro had ridden on before us.

My father was distracted at the fate of his preserver, and taking me by the hand, said —“Acasto, your friend is worthy of you!”

He then ordered our vassals to cut down some boughs of trees, to form a kind of litter, upon which he spread his own cloak, and gently laid Alvaro on it, ordering the men to return, after having stopped the effusion of blood, and in this manner they carried him back to our castle. We had the wound dressed, which owing to its being in a slanting direction, proved not to be mortal. This gave relief to the anxiety of the duke, for if it had been fatal to Alvaro, my father would have mourned his loss, as if he had been his only son.

On my friend recovering from his faintness, I was standing by his bedside, when he stretched out his hand to me, saying—“Is the duke safe?”

I answered—“Thanks to your intrepidity

dity he is; but how shall I express my gratitude? or how alleviate your sufferings?"

He smiling said—"As to gratitude, there is none due, for I have always been your debtor, and am amply repaid for my timely interference, by having been of service to your father; but as to my sufferings, as you are pleased to term the little inconvenience I feel, it is nothing more than a scratch; such a one as I have received fifty of in battle."

My father entered as he was speaking, and taking his hand, said—"Alvaro, from henceforth I adopt you."

Alvaro silently smiled; but his intelligent eyes spoke for him.

This unexpected generosity of my father's almost overpowered me; I threw myself at his feet, gave vent to the effusions of my heart, assured him that the kindness I had received from him during my whole life, did not equal that one action. He raised me with pleasure, saying—"Then it seems Acasto will not be
jealous

jealous of his younger brother?" He turned to Alvaro, laid a hand upon the head of each, adding—"My children, receive the blessing of your father!"

The feelings of two such friends as we were may be conceived, but cannot be described.

My father and I spent our time entirely in the chamber of the wounded chief; and I believe Spain did not contain so happy a trio.

Sebastian frequently visited us, and seemed to share our felicity; for when I introduced Alvaro to him as the adopted son of my father, he appeared surprised, but not displeased. He was particularly attentive to my friend, and would frequently shift his pillows to give ease to his posture, who was much pleased with those little services. Alvaro soon became convalescent, and Sebastian took his leave.

The pleasing gaiety of my friend never forsook him, and my father had been laying some plans for our amusement, pro-

posing among other things we should all three visit the African coast.

Alvaro replied with a smile and a bow, that as his grace would condescend to visit his family, it was necessary to know who they were.

“ My complexion,” said he, “ will tell you I am descended from the Moors;” for his skin was not black, but a dark olive. “ They were the ancient conquerors of Spain, and after many hard struggles with the Castilians, were driven from hence to their native country, being deprived of their estates, and all they possessed, or to seek shelter where they could find it; for the province of Old Castile was the only part of Spain which the Moors could not overcome. Africa was the first place which presented itself, and thither they fled, forming themselves into tribes; and swore eternal enmity to the Spaniards; therefore if they have found us troublesome neighbours, they must allow that they have given us some cause.”

“ Granted,”

“Granted,” said the duke.

“My father,” continued Alvaro, “was amongst the foremost of them to avenge the wrongs of his countrymen, and from his uncommon intrepidity, was chosen one of their chiefs. War was his trade, and valour his only possession. My mother, who was a Spaniard, fled from her native soil with him. In about a year after her exile, she presented him a son. He took the child out of her arms, and, kneeling, dedicated him to revenge the persecutions of his tribe. That son was myself. I was from infancy taught the art of war, being instructed to bear pain without a murmur.

“My mother next presented her husband with a daughter; but he seemed dissatisfied with this gift, saying, if it had been a son, he could have reared it for battle. However, the uncommon beauty of my sister Kora must, I think, have recompensed him for his disappointment. Her complexion is not so dark as mine,

and she is the most beautiful creature my eyes ever beheld; and did I not know that Acasto's heart is engaged, the sight of her might prove dangerous."

The duke nodded his approbation.

Alvaro continued—"After my father had spent years in waging war against the Spaniards, in one dreadful battle he fell. I was fighting by his side at the time, when perceiving that life was ebbing fast, he bequeathed my mother and sister to my care, then said—'Promise me one thing, my son.'—'Name it,' I eagerly exclaimed.—'Promise me,' he replied, 'to avenge my wrongs.'—'I swear eternal hatred to your enemies!' was my answer, which seemed to appease his spirit, for he immediately yielded it up."

The utterance of Alvaro was here choked at the recollection of his unfortunate father; but after some moments of silence, he resumed—"Our tribes, hearing of my father's death, assembling round the body, elected me chief in his stead; at the
same

same time, shewing me the fatal wound, made me swear to bear it in my remembrance. We always met with the most rigorous treatment from our enemies when we were taken prisoners by them, which undoubtedly helped to keep up the spirit of bitterness between us, for the duke of Andalusia had not then taken the command of the Spanish army."

The duke smiled.

The young chief proceeded.—"I have fought from my childhood, and should have continued fighting to this day, had not one generous action overcome all my prejudices—had I not seen, in an unexpected moment, that, contrary to my opinion, humanity was to be found even in the heart of a Spaniard; for had not Acasto warded off the blow aimed against me in our last memorable battle, when I was wounded in several places, I might still have continued his most inveterate foe; for mercy may conquer where force of arms cannot, as it requires, in my opi-

nion, more valour to treat an enemy with clemency, than to hew him into pieces."

Alvaro bowed, and the duke, in rapture, shook him by the hand.

"Think not," continued the chief, "I have acted contrary to the principles of my father, in suffering you to conquer his son; for the nobleness of his nature was such, that the least shadow of generosity from a foe would have made him his friend; and well I know his approving spirit smiled on the action which united us in the inseparable bond that death alone can sever."

Alvaro having finished his artless narrative (continued the hermit), we separated for the night, little dreaming of what we were to witness in the morning. Before I proceed, it is necessary I should give you a sketch of our residence, which was an old Moorish castle of defence, of immense size and strength, built before they were expelled the province of Andalusia. It was defended on one side by the
rock

rock of Gibraltar, and on the other by a strong wall, next the Isthmus which leads into Spain. The entrance was into a large court, surrounded by a high, thick, stone wall, which opened into a second court of the same dimensions, of equal defence, which opened into a third court of the same kind. There were sentinels constantly on duty in the several courts, which rendered it impossible to be surprised by the enemy; and the impenetrable rock, which was almost perpendicular, equally secured us.

At the upper end of the third court stood the castle of Andalusia, which bid defiance to the imbecile attempts of man to demolish it. The walls were three feet thick, and instead of windows, there were left long niches in the walls; for had there been windows, they might have rendered the place less secure. The interior, as well as exterior, of the building, was entirely of stone, which prevented the possibility of its being destroyed by fire. The

castle was immensely large; and after the first entrance was a hall of great dimensions, with a winding stone staircase, which led to the different suits of rooms, and so formed, that any one might see from the upper story what was doing in the hall below; but you must observe, in Spain, owing to the heat of the climate, they do not build their residences so high as in countries where the heat is not so intense. The rooms are constantly kept sprinkled with water, which gives a refreshing coolness, and renders the heat less oppressive.

There was a kind of bastion, or place of refuge, which was formed under ground, and each chamber had a concealed door, which opened by a secret spring into several narrow passages, with small staircases, leading to the subterraneous avenue, which opened into a place of incredible size, so that many troops might assemble there without observation, provided they could gain admittance into the castle; or the inhabitants might, in case of being
conquered,

conquered, which was not very likely, escape this way; for at the further end of this bastion was a serpentine narrow outlet, which opened to the seashore. The secret springs I mentioned were known only, as we supposed, to my father and myself; for there was no occasion to make our people acquainted with them, unless necessity required it.

Early on the morning succeeding that on which Alvaro had given us his little history, one of the slaves who attended him from Africa burst into my chamber with wild affright, exclaiming—"The chief! the chief!" and pointing to the door, was incapable of uttering another word.

Terror-struck, I flew to Alvaro's apartment, and sickened at the sight, as the chamber was literally covered with blood, for my unfortunate friend lay apparently lifeless near the door. The consternation this spectacle threw me into was not to be described, and I was little more collected than the distracted slave; for I had not
the

the sense to attempt administering relief to the sufferer, but stood viewing him in speechless agony, when the voice of the duke, who by this time had entered the chamber, brought me to myself, for he exclaimed—"Arouse, Acasto, and try to restore my poor adopted son!"

We took him up, had his wounds dressed, and after long anxious trials, perceived animation. Our joy was now as great as our grief had been, for we had no hope of seeing him restored.

Who had entered the chamber with the murderous intent, it was impossible to conjecture, for we could not suspect the faithfully-attached slave; and no one could enter the apartment of Alvaro, as the slave always slept in the antechamber, and was positive he fastened the door that night. It was evident some one had been there to do the bloody deed, but who that was, was the question which no person could solve. In vain we examined every inhabitant of the castle, or raised one conjecture

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ture after another, in vain we endeavoured to fathom the mystery; for the more we attempted to elucidate the matter, the more inexplicable it seemed. All the account the slave could give was, that he entered his master's chamber early in the morning, as usual; but on opening the door, and seeing the horrid sight, he instantly ran with terror to me.

Thus we were kept in agonizing ignorance, thus we were doomed to watch and pray for the recovery of my poor, almost murdered Alvaro. That some enemy had been there, could not be denied; but how did he escape? None could tell.

My father wisely determined not to leave Alvaro till he was restored, or laid in the peaceful grave, and we watched in his apartment night and day, ordering a guard on duty in the antechamber.

"Would to God," said my father, "we had taken these precautions twelve hours sooner! but man was not created to see into futurity: born in ignorance, and blind-
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ed by error, he stumbles on through life, nor views things as he should, till he opens his eyes in eternity; though if he was gifted with foresight, his case would be more pitiable still; for the few evils which he might be able to avert, would not compensate for the misery of seeing beforehand what he was doomed to suffer. Yet man will sometimes dare to arraign the wisdom of his Creator—and after all his murmurings, is compelled to acknowledge the decrees of Omnipotence are just.”

“ I cannot here subscribe to your grace’s opinion,” I observed—“ for I cannot think it right, that so noble-hearted a man as my friend should suffer as he has done.”

“ In our finite view of things, it is not,” replied the duke; “ but who knows, whether these trials are not sent to prove the faith and fortitude of the afflicted?”

It was on the third day after the catastrophe, that we were thus moralizing, when Alvaro discovered some signs of sense—and taking me by the hand as I

was

was sitting by the bedside, said—"I hope, Acasto, I shall not die of these wounds?"

"I hope not, my friend," I replied.

"There would be something ignominious in such a death," he observed.

"I hope you will be spared to us many years," was my answer; but without noticing what I said, he continued—"There would be something in it far different to falling in the field of battle, covered with glory!"

The duke came round to the bedside, saying—"My dear adopted son, if your recollection will enable you, do inform us how this dreadful affair happened."

Alvaro was going to speak, when the surgeon entered and forbade all further conversation. Thus our hopes were raised, but not satisfied. Though we could not gain the intelligence we wished, yet the probability of my friend's recovery gave us new life; the little show of his returning reason animated us all to such a degree, it was difficult to tell which felt most,

most, the duke, the slave, or myself. Muley, the slave, capered about the room, prostrated himself at the feet of the duke, ran and kneeled by the side of the bed—kissed the hand of Alvaro, saying—“ Ah, my massa will live, my massa tell you me no kill him ! No, no, Muley will die—massa live !” meaning he was ready to die for his master.

The surgeon, seeing his tumultuous joy, said, he must order him out of the room ; but Muley replied—“ No, no, me leave my massa, me die ; me no kill my massa ; me no speak any more !” Then sitting down at the feet of the bed, seemed afraid to breathe, lest he should disturb his beloved master.

The conduct of this faithfully-attached creature was most exemplary—for he had never ceased to watch by the side of his master’s pillow, nor could he be persuaded to take either food or rest ; and when I offered him any kind of nourishment, he would say—“ No, me no eat ; massa die,
Muley

Muley die!" intimating he would starve himself in case of his master's death.

I now entreated him to take a little wine, which was the first thing the worthy creature had tasted since the horrid transaction took place, and insisted on him retiring to rest; but he said—"No, me joy now, me no sleep"—meaning he could not sleep for joy.

Credulity itself could not harbour a suspicious thought against Muley, his conduct was so opposite to that of a guilty one; for the duke had tried to persuade him to cross the Strait, and go into Africa, to inform the friends of Alvaro of his danger, or to go to the court of Spain, with intelligence for the minister, thinking, if Muley was guilty, he would gladly accept one of these missions, in order that he might make his escape; but he constantly replied—"No, me no leave my massa; if massa die, Muley die—if my massa live, den me go all over de world for you, but me no leave him now."

"This

“This untaught slave,” said I to the duke, “is an example for princes to copy after: without instruction, without the knowledge of any God, save Mars, he is possessed of every amiable quality that can adorn the man of birth, fortune, and education: he would scorn to be guilty of the base acts committed every day by men of science, and is a reproach to sovereigns, princes, statesmen, and generals! Had I a fellow-creature to bring up, I would rear him in the simple ignorance of this faithful black, this untaught African.”

“And keep him without the knowledge of a supreme being?” said the duke.

“Man will not be punished for sins of ignorance,” I replied, “provided he has not slighted an opportunity of gaining information, but for the sin of doing wrong when he knows how to act right.”

“Granted,” said the duke; “but allowing an enlightened man to transgress to the utmost of his ability, may he not live to

to repent—may he not find mercy at the eleventh hour?”

“He *may*,” I answered; “but I should be loth to try the experiment—I should be loth to have the doom of many well-educated villains, whose repentance, perhaps, may come too late—whose whole lives have been wasted in injuring their fellow-creatures—whose faculties have been exerted to the utmost stretch to do evil; who like many priests I have met with, know how to do good, but will not practise it; and then depend on a deathbed repentance to wash their crimes away!”

“You go too far,” said the duke—“it is not for us to solve this subject; for the only pattern which human nature ought to follow, has forbidden us to pick the lock where God has allowed no key! Say not, my son, who shall ascend into heaven, nor who shall descend into the deep; depend on the great sufficiency of the Redeemer, and rest assured that all may be saved if they will; and those who are
eternally

eternally lost, will have the bitter reflection, that it was their own choice."

"That makes me think," said I, "that the fate of this uninformed, unsophisticated, honest black, will be more preferable to——"

Alvaro interrupted me by exclaiming —"The Mask, the Mask!"

The electric shock these words gave us, can hardly be imagined—for they convinced us the intellects of Alvaro were affected; and the duke, seating himself by the bedside, said—"My poor boy! his imagination is wandering back to the scene in the wood, where he saved my life, and nearly lost his own!"

"Will these wounds be my last?" asked Alvaro.

"I hope they will," replied my father; "but I hope they will not be your end."

My friend shook his head, and remained silent. I knew what was passing in his mind; I knew the nobleness of his nature to be such, that he scorned to die by the
hand

hand of an assassin. I kneeled by the side of his bed, put up a silent, fervent prayer for his recovery, which he observing, said—"I feel as if I should be restored to you."

The surgeon, feeling his pulse, pronounced him much better.

"You mean to flatter us," said I—"for if my friend is better, why is his mind more disturbed?"

"That is not the case," replied the doctor; "and if my patient will promise to talk moderately, I have no objection to his holding a little conversation with you now."

The duke shook the surgeon by the hand, saying—"You should have imposed moderation upon me, for I scarcely know how to conduct myself with prudence."

I still had my doubts, fearing the doctor was mistaken. Muley was almost frantic with joy, gave the surgeon a hearty hug, ran and seated himself on the floor, saying—"Now, massa, you tell me no kill you."

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“Is it possible you imagine I harbour such a thought of you, my faithful fellow?” asked Alvaro. “So far from it, I am certain, could your own life have prevented these unfriendly stabs, I should not have received one of them. What demon has possessed thine honest soul, to make thee harbour such a monstrous thought of thine unfortunate master? Well am I assured, if my friend Muley had been present, the dagger of the assassin must have entered his heart ere it had pierced me!”

Muley, in rapture, kissed his master's hand, saying—“Oh, massa, me love you very big much; me live, now you live; me die, when you die!”

With admiration we beheld this pure child of nature, this perfect stranger to dissimulation. What a contrast to the sycophantic courtier, to the deceptive, false friend! Again I inwardly sighed with regret, that such an instance of fidelity should so rarely be found in the more polished circles of society. Before I had
time

time to moralize longer on the subject, the duke desired my friend to give us the information we so much wished.

“ I will tell you,” said he, “ all I can recollect.—On that memorable night when I had been giving you some account of my family, we separated in higher spirits than usual, and I immediately retired to bed, but not to sleep ; for the kind condescension of the duke, in proposing to visit my native shore, was too pleasing a theme to suffer me to give way to so dull a god as Somnus. I had lain some hours, anticipating the happy future, when I suddenly felt a cold hand on my face, but heard not the least noise, and starting up, beheld by the light of the lamp pendent in my apartment, the same brazen-masked figure we encountered in the forest. He was enveloped in a long black cloak, with a large plume of black feathers in his hat—his face concealed by a brazen mask, whilst a dagger gleamed in his right hand. A violent scuffle ensued ; for though un-
VOL. I. D armed,

armed, I determined to sell my life as dearly as possible. I wrestled with him, notwithstanding he had several times stabbed me; and having obtained possession of the poniard, plunged it into his body, when, owing to loss of blood, I fell; yet by what means he gained entrance, or how he made his escape, seemed to me inexplicable. I called several times to Muley, but suppose the poor fellow was too deeply buried in sleep to hear; and being faint from loss of blood, all recollection entirely forsook me."

The consternation Alvaro's account of the assassin threw us into was great indeed, for we were as much in the dark as ever.

"It is plain," said the duke, "that your enemy and mine must be the same person; but have you no idea who it is?"

"None in the least," answered Alvaro; "but I am certain he is somebody of consequence, from his demeanour, and from his cloak flying open in the scuffle, that
gave

gave me a momentary view of his person, which was richly attired."

"How happens it," asked the duke, "that my son, Acasto, has escaped the malice of this inveterate, unknown foe?"

"Your question is easily answered," replied my friend; "for you must recollect Acasto was some distance behind us when the Brazen Mask attacked you in the forest, and probably I incurred his displeasure by frustrating his evil intentions towards you. It is not likely that he has any greater friendship for Acasto than he has for you or me; but circumstances have not yet thrown him within his power; for he who is the enemy of one, must be the enemy of the other two, as one soul seems to influence all three of us."

"You are right," said the duke; "and I tremble alike for both my sons."

"I will go," said I, "to court, and lay the matter before the king."

"By no means," exclaimed my father; "you may be attacked on the road by our

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inveterate

inveterate foe, when his aim may be more sure than it has been against Alvaro and myself. Why should I be deprived of the best of sons, and brought down to the grave in sorrow?"

"Oh, my father," said I, "teach me how to act, and I will obey."

"Promise me then," he answered, "to quit Spain, with Alvaro, immediately."

"What, and leave you behind?" I asked.

"It must be so," observed the duke.

"No—never," was my answer.

"No—never," echoed Alvaro—"never will we leave our more than father behind us!"

"My children," said the duke, "you distress me exceedingly; but it must be as I at first proposed, for your lives are in hourly danger; and our measures must be prompt, as we have no time to lose. Believe me, I shall cherish with pleasing fondness the remembrance of your affectionate

tionate zeal towards me, and hope we shall meet in happier times."

"I will never leave my honoured father, exposed to the midnight assassin's dagger," I replied.

"Acasto," said the duke, "you never gave me cause to be seriously angry with you, and will you do it now? My life hangs upon yours, and at such a time as this, shall Acasto's father sue, and will he refuse him?"

"Your eloquence is such, that if it were possible, you would persuade us to abandon you," observed Alvaro.

"I will consent to go any where your excellence pleases to appoint," I answered, "provided you will accompany us."

"That is impossible," replied the duke; "for you know my military avocations at this time require my presence here."

"And here," said I, "you will fall beneath the poniard of our secret enemy."

My father was going to urge something further on the subject, when a messenger

arrived from court, with dispatches from the king, informing us that Sebastian had been beset by banditti, and seriously wounded; at the same time conveying a sarcastic message from donna Isidora, thanking me for the *frequent* visits I had *lately* paid her. I had been betrothed from infancy to this lady, who was of high birth, possessed of immense wealth, a fine figure, a tolerable share of beauty, a great stock of pride, and a tyrannical temper: such was the wife, my father and the king, who had my interest much at heart, had chosen for me. It must be confessed, I had not been the most attentive lover in the world, and certainly had given the lady some little cause of complaint; for supposing she must inevitably be mine, I did not think it necessary to trouble my head about her;—such are the ill effects arising from parents betrothing their children in infancy! But to return. The duke had no sooner read the dispatches from the king, than he changed his mind
respecting

respecting my quitting Spain, saying—
“It must be as you wish, Acasto, about your going to Madrid; for you shall immediately return with the messenger, accompanied by a strong guard; but, remember, I expect your compliance when you return to our castle, should I deem it unsafe for you to remain here.”

Glad on any terms to avoid being sent out of the country which contained my father, and having made him promise that Alvaro, who was fast recovering, should remain with him, for I knew he would preserve the duke's life at the expence of his own, I gave my word of honour that I would comply.

“Perhaps,” said my father, “such a step may be unnecessary; for, from the tenour of his majesty's letter, I rather think your nuptials with the lady Isidora will shortly take place; and in that case, your residence will be fixed at Madrid; for as you will be mostly about the person

of the king, I shall then think you perfectly safe."

"Then you think there is no safety but in the chains of matrimony?" said I smiling.

"I certainly do think a good wife an excellent gift," replied my father; "I certainly do think there is safety for a young man in the arms of a beautiful woman, who he can with honour look upon and say, she is mine.—What is your opinion, Alvaro?"

"Heaven bless the ladies!" said he, laughing, "I am in love with the whole sex, and adore them all alike! but I never yet saw the one who could so far take possession of my heart, as to make me exclude all the rest, and give up my liberty to her sovereign will."

"I have applied to a pretty counsellor," answered the duke; "but if Acasto cannot love a fine woman, he is not a chip off the old block."

"I admire the ladies," said I, "as much

as

as any man, and acknowledge that wives are necessary evils, though I do not see any urgent reasons for taking one immediately; and as I can have donna Isidora at any time, I think I might enjoy my liberty a little longer."

"There lies your mistake," observed my father; "you think, because you and Isidora are betrothed to each other, you can marry her ten or twenty years hence; whereas, the lady's patience is now almost exhausted, owing to the undeserved neglect you have treated her with. You do not prefer any other woman, and yet will not behave towards her with common attention: however, if it is the wish of the king, and the lady will comply, remember I anticipate no backwardness on your part, Acasto, but shall be glad for the ceremony to take place as soon as possible."

My father looked rather grave at the conclusion of this speech, yet on my assuring him he should have no cause of

complaint on my account, he regained his usual placidity.

Alvaro was much amused with the predicament I was placed in, and gaily wished me joy, desiring me to send him a true account of the miseries of matrimony, as well as its joys, that he might weigh both before he ventured on the fatal leap.

“Not quite so fast, my friend,” said I; “recollect I am not tied up yet; and perhaps the lady will be so kind as not to have me.”

“But suppose she should be so cruel as to say she *will* have you, what will Acasto do then?” asked my friend.

“Try to make her the best husband in the world,” I replied.

“Well answered, boy!” said the duke, clapping me on the shoulder; “keep to that determination, and the remainder of my life will be spent in happiness.”

The next morning, my retinue being in waiting, I took leave of my father and my friend, which threw a little damp over
my

my spirits; but the lively sallies of Alvaro, who still bantered me with my prospect of *happiness*, as he called it, soon chased the gloom away, and I departed in a tolerable merry mood, considering I was going to shackle myself with the bonds of wedlock, sorely against my will.

Not any thing occurred worthy of notice during my journey, and I arrived safely at Madrid. I repaired immediately to the Escorial, where his majesty received me as if I had been his son, so pleased was he with my unexpected appearance; for he had no idea I should return with the messenger.

“This looks well,” said his majesty, “and may do more in your favour than all my rhetoric; for, I assure you, donna Isidora is in the dumps, and the queen much incensed against you; for you are aware she will resent any slight committed against her niece Isidora; and you know likewise, that Isabella’s will has always been mine.”

This I knew, to my sorrow; for it was the queen who first proposed this alliance, and who governed the king with despotic sway.

“I hope,” said I, “the ladies will pardon me when they hear my defence; but I dare not encounter the storm till your majesty has informed them of my arrival, and prepared the way for my admission.”

The king laughed at the scrape I had brought myself into, promising me his assistance.—“While I go and break the ice for you,” said he, “I will send you a companion, no other than Sebastian, our kinsman, who is recovered of the salute which the banditti gave him in the forest, and is now at court on a visit.”

I was surprised at this intelligence; and the king leaving the apartment, immediately sent in Sebastian, who anxiously inquired after the duke and Alvaro.

I related to him the unfortunate occurrence of my friend being almost murdered by an unknown hand, and was surprised

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to find, on further conversation, that it took place on the same night on which Sebastian had been beset by banditti.

“Depend upon it,” said Sebastian, “that some one is determined to extirpate our race, and the matter must be laid before the king, or rather before the queen, for you know she governs the state.”

“So much the worse for me,” said I.

His majesty coming in at that moment, prevented me from finishing my sentence.—“I am sorry to be the herald of bad news,” said he, “but the ladies are inexorable: the queen refuses to see you till you have made your peace with Isidora, who refuses to see you at all. Isidora desires me to say, that as you have stayed away to please yourself, you may now stay away to please her.”

“So!” said I; “what is to be done?”

“Take the lady by storm,” answered Sebastian; “for, depend on it, she will be won no other way. Women are such capricious creatures, that if they have much
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of their own will, there is no knowing to what excess their folly may lead them."

"Hold ! hold !" cried the king ; " you must not be too severe against them ; for, in my opinion, the more a woman is thwarted, the more refractory she will prove ; and am certain there is no possibility of managing them, but by fair means."

" I know your majesty speaks from experience," answered Sebastian, with a smile ; " but rest assured, if I had married queen Isabella herself, I would have made her know that I was her lord and master."

The king shook his head, saying—" You speak like an inexperienced, unmarried man ; but I shall probably live to see you thrust your head into the noose, when I hope you will be the most complete hen-pecked husband upon earth."

" Thank you for your good wishes," said Sebastian, bowing low ; " but if they are ever verified, I know little of my own resolution."

" Time

"Time will prove," replied the king; "and I only wish your lady may be a second Isidora, who, you know, has not yet learned the lesson of submission."

"But I would soon teach it her," said Sebastian: "as to Acasto, he will make the worst tutor in the world; he will indulge that woman till she tears his eyes out; and will make her a greater tyrant than her own violent temper, and the partiality of the queen, put together."

"Pray stay," said I, "till you are worth a mistress of your own, and manage her as well as you can; but prithee let mine alone, for every ill-natured expression you make about Isidora I deem pointed at myself."

"Oh, thou spiritless, good-natured, complaisant slave!" said Sebastian, laughing; "I wish the lady may wring your ears the first time you venture into her presence."

"Remember, it may be your turn some time," observed the king; "but to put a
stop

stop to this wrangling about the ladies, I beg your attendance in my closet, Acasto, and advise our kinsman to retire to his, to con over by heart a lesson on patience ; for if I mistake not, he will some day or other stand in need of it."

" If that is to be the subject," answered Sebastian, "I shall make a very dull scholar, but promise to do my best ;" and rising, left the room.

His majesty led the way to his closet, where I followed him, wondering what he could have to communicate which needed privacy. On entering, he took my hand, saying—" My friend and kinsman, you know I have the match between you and Isidora much at heart, and wished to speak a few words with you in private, fearing Sebastian may mislead you by wrong advice. You know I have no issue, but look upon you and Isidora as the inheritors of my wealth and crown, provided this marriage takes place ; yet you have exceedingly perplexed me with your inattention

tention to the lady. You must acknowledge she is a fine woman ; and, saving a little flaw in her temper, is unexceptionable in every other respect. You have not only wounded the pride of your mistress, but incurred the displeasure of the queen, who cannot brook an insult offered to her darling ; and I have given you this short lecture to prevent your adopting Sebastian's advice ; for, take my word for it, neither Isabella, nor Isidora, will be managed that way."

The king had lectured me more on the subject than I expected, considering the mildness of his disposition ; but I saw his motive was good, and respected him the more for it, promising to be guided entirely by him ; and related the circumstances of my father being attacked in the forest, when my friend saved his life, by receiving the poniard in his own breast ; and likewise of the attempt afterwards made on the life of Alvaro, in our castle, by some secret enemy.

" Indeed,"

"Indeed," said the king, "this information alarms me excessively; I must hasten to the queen, to see what can be done. That African is a brave fellow. Why did not you inform me of these transactions sooner?"

"Because his life was despaired of, and I could not persuade myself to leave him while there was danger," I replied, "which was the reason of my seeming neglect."

"True, true," observed his majesty; "you have some excuse now; and I will endeavour to turn it to your advantage: in the mean time retire to rest—try to recover the fatigues of your journey, and I will give you audience in the morning." So saying, he shook me cordially by the hand, when we separated for the night.

I could say of our king what could be said of very few kings—that he was a good-hearted man; and if he acted wrong, it was not from any evil inclinations of his own, but from a too complying disposition, and owing to the dictates of the
queen,

queen, whose influence over him was unbounded.

My reflections during the night were not of the most pleasing kind, for I was uneasy on account of my father and my friend, besides being mortified at the repulse I had met with from my fair tyrant, nor could I entirely free myself from blame. I arose early in the morning unrefreshed, and strolled into the gardens, which possessed all that art and nature could combine, to make them enchanting. I had not wandered long, before I espied Isidora at a window, in conversation with the king and queen. I immediately made my obeisance, but had the mortification to see the ladies turn scornfully away, and disappear.

It is customary in Spain for the inhabitants to rise early, and retire during the heat of the day to take a siesta, or, what is vulgarly called in England, a nod after dinner.

The king shortly after joined me in the garden.

garden. When the first salutations had passed, I inquired after the health of her majesty.

“She is well,” he replied.

“And the lady Isidora?” said I.

“Still inflexible,” he answered. “The queen is not pleased at your making a friend of an African, and is uneasy at the strange occurrences which have taken place in your family. Isidora allows you have some little excuse for your late conduct, though she will not exonerate you till she knows the whole particulars, but will not condescend to see you.”

“How then am I to clear myself?” I asked.

“That is what puzzles me,” answered my royal counsellor. “A sudden thought has struck me, which is this:—you shall write to her, and try to soften her, before an interview takes place.”

I was pleased with this proposal, and composed the most ardent, submissive epistle I was capable of, entreating to be admitted

ted to her presence; which the king having read and approved, we sent it by the hand of one of her pages, anxiously waiting the result. We were not kept long in suspense, for the page came to us in a few minutes, with the letter in his hand, saying, his mistress, on hearing who it came from, had returned it unopened! This was a blow I did not expect—this was a vexation I was not prepared for; and even his majesty was more ruffled at it than I had ever seen him before.

While I looked upon Isidora as mine, I never troubled my head about her; but soon as I saw there was a chance of losing the lady, I felt more uneasiness on her account than I thought myself capable of.

Sebastian joined us, and seeing my chagrin, was highly diverted, saying—"I tell you what, neither you nor his majesty know how to manage this gipsy of a woman, therefore it remains for me to instruct you."

"And

“And pray,” said I, “how am I to proceed?”

“Run away with her to-night, marry her to-morrow, and lock her up for the remainder of her life,” replied my instructor.

“That is impossible,” observed the king; “she is too strongly guarded.”

Rage succeeded mortification. I raved—stormed—swore everlasting hatred to the whole sex—vowed not to stay another hour in Madrid, and ordered my vassals to prepare for my immediate departure to the province of Andalusia. I knew not whether my feelings could be said to arise from love, or hatred; for I was almost driven to madness. The king soothed me—Sebastian rallied me, saying—“Would I fly from a weak, capricious woman? No; I would stay, and make her tremble at the sound of my footstep; I should glory in taming such a shrew.”

“And so will I,” was my reply; “I will see her, or perish in the attempt.”

One of my servants came to say, my re-
tinue

tinue was ready to depart—"Then tell them to ride to the devil," I exclaimed, "and take the lady Isidora with them."

The man stood seemingly petrified.

"Acasto," said his majesty, "this conduct ill befits the duke of Andalusia's son; you certainly must be mad."

"I know that," said I; "but mad or not, I am determined to see Isidora, let what will be the consequence."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Sebastian; "this is acting like a man."

I said no more, but rushed up a flight of steps to the apartment where Isidora was, for as it was by this time midday, I knew she would be found in her retiring-room. It was a spacious alcove, built of the whitest marble. A range of Corinthian columns, of the same beautiful marble, inlaid with gold, supported the roof; the windows were shaded from the heat of the sun by a green lattice-work, through which the most delightful flowers peeped, and seemed to invite their mistress's hand
to

to pluck them, that they might have the felicity of expiring on her bosom. There were six marble vases of the purest white, ornamented with gold, filled with the most exquisite perfumes; besides twelve marble and gold stands, supporting the choicest fruits and flowers. At the upper end were six marble steps, on the top of which stood a couch covered with white satin and gold fringe, to correspond with the interior of this unparalleled retreat, where lay reclined the arbitress of my fate. She had a book in her hand, and was clothed in a thin blue robe, girt round the waist with a band of pearls, her hair being ornamented with pearls likewise. At each end of the sofa stood an African female slave, clad in white, who alternately fanned their mistress to keep off the moschettos, which are very troublesome in that country.

I leaned against one of the pillars, which concealed me for some time, in order to recover from the agitation which I was in; but

but one of the slaves presently espied me, who shrieking, pointed to the spot.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Isidora; "what bold intruder is that?"

"'Tis I," was my answer, coming from my concealment, and bending one knee.

"Oh, *you*, is it?" the lady asked, with tantalizing scorn, again reading in the book which she held in her hand.

After a pause of some time—"Madam!" said I.

"Sir!" she replied, and read on.

"Isidora!" I exclaimed.

"Acasto!" answered the lady, again casting her eyes on the book.

"Heavens, madam, this is too much!" I vociferated; "this is more than mortal man can bear—this indifference drives me to very madness!"

"Tell my people," said she, turning to one of her slaves, "to take that maniac, and bind him."

"Donna Isidora," said I, "is it for this I have so long tried to obtain an inter-

view with you? is it for such treatment as this I have ventured unbidden into your presence, and risked incurring the displeasure of the queen?"

"Indeed it is," was her answer.

"Cruel, unfeeling woman!" escaped my lips.

"Pray, sir," asked the lady, "what is your request?"

"To beg you will hear my defence," I answered.

"Begin, sir—I am all attention," said my beautiful tyrant.

"My seeming neglect has been occasioned by an attempt which was made on the life of my much-valued father," I stammered out, "whose life was preserved by a justly-esteemed friend receiving the dagger in his own breast. Had this friend been a stranger, common humanity, joined with gratitude, would have made me watch by his couch till his recovery; but as it was the friend of my heart, I leave you to judge of my feelings. He was not
recovered

recovered of his wounds—he had scarcely gained a small portion of strength, so as to enable him to sit up, ere he was again attacked, and almost murdered by the same mysterious assassin. In vain we endeavoured to elucidate the matter, and our time was spent in anxious watchings by the side of this unfortunate sufferer. He is not now entirely out of danger, yet I have left him to the care of my father, and have travelled post to Madrid, to face my offended Isidora, and assure her my negligence has not been wilful, but from untoward circumstances.”

“All that you offer as an excuse I willingly accept,” she replied, “and should have commended you, had you slighted me for years, provided the danger of your father’s life, or that of your friend, had been the occasion of it; but there is one part of the business you have forgotten to clear up, therefore I beg you will answer me two questions; the first is, how long

is it since the duke was attacked in the forest?"

I answered—"Six weeks."

"The second question is," said the lady, "what engaged your attention for above four months previous to that circumstance taking place?"

I was too confounded to make an answer, and stood playing with the feathers in my hat, which I held in my hand as though I did not hear her, when she again repeated the question.

I coughed, stammered, and replied—"Nothing."

"Oh, *nothing!*" repeated the lady; "then as you have forsaken me for *nothing*, to *nothing* you may return."

If the marble floor on which I stood had given way and closed over me for ever, I should have been thankful; but there was nowhere for me to hide my head, for she had condemned me out of my own mouth, and I stood the statue of confusion,

confusion, when the king and queen entered, to witness my perplexity.

The fact was, I had been so happy in the society of my friend Alvaro, that I had not for several months bestowed a thought upon my mistress, who had questioned me so artfully, that I had tacitly acknowledged the truth.

“Well,” said the king, “I hope as my adopted children have met, that an understanding has taken place.”

“Oh yes!” observed the lady, “we understand each other perfectly, I assure you; and what does your majesty suppose is the reason which my faithful swain gives for having forsaken me for the last six months?”

“I cannot tell,” answered the king.

“*Nothing*,” replied my fair tormentor, laughing.

“A *weighty* reason, certainly,” observed the king.

The queen cast a contemptuous smile at me, and a loud laugh burst from be-

hind one of the pillars, when Sebastian came forward, convulsed with mirth.

I bit my lips, and thought I should have sunk with vexation, but could not offer one syllable to extricate me out of the mortifying situation I had plunged myself into.

“How happens it, niece,” asked her majesty, “that you have changed your resolution, and permitted this gentleman to have an interview with you?”

“I did not grant him that liberty,” replied Isidora; “but he thought proper to enter unbidden, which I am not sorry for now, because he has confessed that I am of as much consequence to him as—*nothing*.”

“Come, come,” said the king, “you must forgive him: consider the most perfect of us are not infallible, for every lover has some time or other given his mistress cause of anger.”

“If I *must* pardon him, I can assure your

your majesty it will not be at present," replied this haughty woman.

"Oh," said Sebastian, "if I had you to manage, donna, I should act very differently to what that poor fellow does, who stands trembling there; I would make you know——"

"I will thank Sebastian to retire," interrupted the lady, "and when I need his interference, he will be sent for."

"Withdraw!" said the queen, speaking in the imperative mood; when the young man bowing, left the alcove.

I saw that even Sebastian, with all his boasted impudence, was awed before my beautiful tyrant.

"Pray, niece," said the queen, "what is your determination with respect to the duke of Andalusia's son?"

"To banish him," was the answer.

"That must not be," said the king—
"Isabella, my love, you must allow me to speak now—I cannot agree to that."

"I think Isidora perfectly right," re-

plied her majesty. "Shall it be told to future ages, that the niece of the queen of Spain, whose hand has been sought by monarchs, has been slighted, scorned, and contemned, by the son of a duke?"

I saw the storm was gathering, and kneeled to my mistress, but spoke not.

"Speak, man," said the king; "if you are not struck dumb, say something for yourself."

"I like his silence better than any thing he can urge in his own behalf," Isidora observed; "therefore, as your majesty wishes to befriend him, I will limit his banishment to six months; during which time, he shall make no inquiry after me, nor take any farther notice of me than he did in the six months he forsook me for—*nothing*! What says my kind aunt to this arrangement?"

"I approve it beyond any thing you could propose," answered the queen, "and hope Acasto will bear in mind your extreme

treme lenity, in limiting the time of his absence to so short a period."

"If Isidora loved Acasto, could she be satisfied to remain six months without seeing or hearing from him?" I asked.

"Ah, that is right, man," said his majesty; "speak for yourself—take courage: a very natural question indeed! What says Isidora to this?"

"She will answer it by a question equally as natural," replied the lady. "If Acasto loved Isidora, could *he* have remained six months without either seeing or hearing from *her*?"

"Well said," observed the queen; "a very natural question indeed! What says Acasto to this?"

"We will not say another word on the subject," replied the king, "lest we should sink deeper into disgrace, for it is impossible to manage the ladies, but by suffering them to have their own way; therefore we will act as you direct."

"I am glad your majesty at last thinks

as you ought to do on this subject," observed the queen; "and have no doubt but Isidora will in time be able to bring Acasto to his senses, as I have brought you to yours."

My good-natured sovereign kissed her hand as he smiled upon her, for he never could persuade himself that it was possible for his Isabella to be in the wrong.

"May not I beg that the time of my banishment may be for a shorter period?" I asked, addressing Isidora.

"No, not an hour less," was her answer.

"Where do you intend me to go?" said I.

"Wherever you please," she replied.

"When do you wish me to depart?" I demanded.

"Immediately," she answered.

"Before you go hence, young man," said the queen, "I wish to speak a few words with you. I understand you have formed a strict friendship with an African chief, one of our greatest foes. You may
say

say he saved the life of your father: probably he did, and I would be the last person in all Spain to induce you to be ungrateful for so signal a service; but recollect, we are well aware that you took this friend to your confidence long before he rescued your father, and for no other reason than the caprice of the moment. Does it look well, think you, for a branch of the house of Spain, in whose veins the blood-royal flows, to form alliance with one of the deadliest foes of our nation? What impelled the duke to indulgé you so far? We should have taken more serious notice of this affair, had it not been for the tried allegiance of your father; but remember we command you, on your arrival in Andalusia, to send this new-found friend back to his native shore, and forbid you ever to hold faith with an African."

I bowed, but did not answer, and bent one knee to Isidora, taking her hand, saying—"Allow me to imprint one kiss on the hand which inflicts my punishment."

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"This is more than could be expected from Acasto," said the queen, "and I do believe, with proper management, Isidora will make a rational being of him!" at the same time extending her hand to me, which was a condescension I did not hope for. Having kissed her majesty's hand, I hurried out of the alcove, followed by the king.

"Well, well," said his majesty, "this affair has ended better than I thought it would, and the ladies have been more merciful than we had reason to expect; for your conduct has certainly been reprehensible, and by espousing your cause, I have sunk as deeply into the scrape as yourself."

"I shall ever bear in remembrance your majesty's kind interference in my behalf, and hope you will not think me too importunate if I crave another boon," said I.

"What is that?" he asked.

"It is," I replied, "that you will use your influence with your royal consort, in
favour

favour of my friend, and force us not to part; for if half his worth was known, the queen would be the first promoter of our friendship."

"I have no doubt but he has merit," observed the king, "or else Andalusia would not have countenanced him; but as to changing the queen's mind on any subject (particularly respecting the Africans, for she has the greatest antipathy to them), it is almost an impossibility, for you know she is a little inclined to obstinacy, and has some reason to be so; for having a strong reflecting mind, the opinion she first forms invariably proves right: however, I will do my best."

So infatuated was the king respecting her majesty, that if she had asserted the moon to be made of glass, I am confident he would have believed it to be the case; therefore I plainly saw there was no hope for me respecting my unfortunate friend Alvaro.

My sovereign seeing me dejected, said

—"Acasto,

—“Acasto, I am and ever will be your friend, as long as you do not give my Isabella any great cause of anger; therefore, you have no reason for this melancholy, but must pass your time as cheerfully as you can during your exile; at the expiration of which you may return, and make Isidora your own.”

The good-hearted creature shook me by the hand, wishing me perfect felicity, and was bidding me adieu, when Sebastian came to us, entreating his majesty's permission to accompany me a few leagues on the road.

“By all means, by all means,” replied the king; “and try to raise Acasto's spirits, for he seems as if he would bear his banishment with but little fortitude.” Then, waving his hand, quitted us.

My suite being ready, we mounted our mules, turning our backs on the palace, which contained two of the most arbitrary, perverse, female spirits in the whole world.

I quitted Madrid in no enviable state of mind, with a firm resolution never to return to it, for I was mortified to my heart's core, stung to the quick at the triumph of Isidora, grieved on account of the command to part with Alvaro, and alarmed for the safety of my revered father; for I knew if I offended the vindictive Isabella, she would wreak her vengeance on him. I had no prospect of happiness, whether I married Isidora or not.

To unite myself to such a woman, was ensuring wretchedness for life; and not to marry her, was encountering a storm of the bitterest persecution that could be set on foot against me.

Buried in my own reflections, I rode on—nor heeded the many questions put to me by Sebastian; till stopping short, and taking hold of the bridle of my beast, he said—"Has your mistress the power of petrifying you, and has she really transformed you into a statue?"

bestirp 1

"Peace,"

"Peace," answered I, "and leave me to myself."

"There is no peace," said he, "to a lover!"

"Too well," I rejoined, "do I feel the truth of your maxim."

"Pray, Acasto," he asked, "did you get your ears boxed?"

"Cease your bantering," I replied, "for I am not in a mood to bear it."

"Egad!" said he, "I was very glad to make my escape out of the alcove—for she seized upon me like a tigress!"

"Where was your boasted resolution—where was your vaunted power then?" I asked?

"Oh, I had no right to use it," he answered; "but I have the power to release you out of your thralldom respecting that lady."

"How in the name of wonder is that to be brought about?" I eagerly demanded.

"By your resigning her to me," he replied.

"You

"You know," said I, "that is not in my power; you know I am betrothed to her; and the king, the queen, the duke, as well as the lady herself, are all determined on the match."

"Yet all that will not deter me," said he; "for if you will allow me to try my success, I will woo her, win her, marry her, and master her!"

I smiled at his conceit, saying—"I doubt you will find yourself mistaken; but you have my leave to try, and Heaven grant you may succeed! for if you will do as you say, and rid me of my tormentor, I shall be almost inclined to worship you."

"Cheer up then," said he; "but remember this proposal for ever remains a secret between us, provided I should fail."

I promised not to divulge it—"But how," asked I, "can you think of marrying Isidora, when you know her disposition so well?"

"It is because I know her affluence so well,"

well," he replied. "She has riches enough to gild the pill of matrimony, was it more bitter than gall itself—and estates enough to thrust it down, should it stick in my throat. I intend to marry the fortune, not the lady."

I laughed at his idea, but was not surprised, for avarice had always been his governing passion. We pursued our journey in a more agreeable manner than it began, for I felt my spirits lighter since the proposal of Sebastian; though I knew it arose from a selfish motive, yet that would not lessen the good which would accrue to me, in the event of his success. My fears would sometimes surmount my hopes—for I was inclined to believe the lady would marry me out of pure contradiction; but yet I cherished the thought, that she might be pleased with the offer of Sebastian's hand, for he was of a great family, though not so nearly related to the king as I was; had considerable possessions, a good person, and an insinuating address.

address. He was full of his project, and so elated with the idea of bearing off the prize, that he accompanied me further than he at first intended; for we did not separate till I entered the borders of Andalusia. We parted in mutual confidence, and you may be sure I did not fail to wish him success with all my heart.

I proceeded some miles further, but the intense heat of the day obliged me to rest at a small inn, till the coolness of the evening would suffer me to continue. I determined to travel in the night, that I might arrive at our castle early the next morning. Having refreshed myself and followers at the inn, we again set forward at the close of day. The moon had arisen in full splendour as we entered the forest, where my father had been attacked, and Alvaro had been wounded. My people halted, entreating me to proceed no further till daylight, saying—"We fear not for ourselves, but for you. It is not long since the duke's life was attempted in this gloomy

gloomy forest, and should any thing happen to our young master, how shall we face his excellency again?"

I smiled at their fears, till my servant, who had attended me from my birth, said—"For myself I care not, as no one will think my life worth the trouble of taking; and if my beloved master will consent not to travel further to-night, I will go alone to the castle, and inform the duke he may expect him by this time to-morrow."

I at last yielded to his importunities, but would not suffer him to precede me, as there was no real necessity—and determined to pass the night on the skirts of the wood. We tied our mules to the trees, then spreading our cloaks on the grass, laid ourselves down to enjoy the cool night breezes, which were a great luxury after the oppressive heat of a summer's day.

My people being fatigued with their journey, were soon safely locked in the arms of Somnus; and I shortly after yielded

ed to the stupifying influence of that dull god. I was aroused from my slumber by some one shaking me violently by the shoulder; and on opening my eyes, fixed them for the first time on the—Brazen Mask! He was enveloped in a long black cloak, with a large plume of black feathers in his hat; and motioning with his hand for me not to speak, said in a deep-toned voice—"Acasto, marry Isidora at your peril!"

He immediately fled into the wood, but my servant Carlo waking perceived him, and starting up, followed him so quickly, as to catch hold of his cloak—when they wrestled together for some time, till the Mask proving the strongest of the two, got from him, and was lost in the thickness of the forest, leaving a piece of his cloak in the hand of Carlo, who would not loose his hold.

I was too confounded at the sudden appearance of this strange person, to have the sense to assist my servant, or I might
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probably

probably have escaped the evils which followed me.

“Who can that villain be?” said Carlo; “his strength can be equalled only by Hercules; for I never reckoned myself a powerless man, yet I seemed as nothing in his hand.”

“How happens it,” said I, “that we have both escaped being wounded?”

“Because,” replied Carlo, “he is probably not armed; for if he had had only a stiletto about him, he would have plunged it into me for wrestling so long with him.”

The appearance of this unaccountable figure turned my thoughts into a different channel, and made me again fear for my father and my friend; and I in vain perplexed myself with the question of—“Who is he?” I could not recollect any person that resembled his figure, for he seemed taller than any one I was acquainted with; and how was it possible for my marriage with Isidora to affect him?

I began to think he was a *ci-devant* lover

lover of the lady's, or some one about the court, as my pretensions to the niece of the queen was known by few, except my own family.—“Why had he given me this notice not to marry Isidora? and how did he know where to find me?”

Carlo answered—“Because he is the devil.”

I smiled at the supposition of the man, but did not contradict him, knowing that some weak minds are addicted to superstition.

Carlo aroused his fellow-servants, telling them to keep watch for the devil, for he had been there, leaving a piece of his black cloak in his hand.

Some stared, others laughed at the assertion of Carlo, but all were astonished at the piece of the cloak which he presented to them, and did not feel themselves inclined to sleep any longer. We passed our time till daybreak in useless conjecture about this unaccountable being, when

when the gloom of night gave way to the rosy streaks of morn.

We mounted our mules, set forward in the same direction the Brazen Mask had taken, beating about every bush, in the vain hope of finding him. In the evening I arrived at our castle, mortified, alarmed, spiritless, and disappointed.

My father welcomed me with true paternal affection—Alvaro received me with the sincerest friendship—our vassals hailed me with shouts of joy; but all could scarcely raise my spirits, so as to enable me to return their kindness.

I anxiously inquired whether they had been troubled by their mysterious visitor, and was informed they had not been interrupted by him during my absence.

“That is some consolation,” said I, “though it is my opinion he is not far off;” and related to them his rousing me from sleep, on the skirts of the forest, the night before.

Muley

Muley exclaimed—"Ah, me kill dat debbel Mask! me tear him bit from bit!"

Carlo had informed him it was his opinion that the being who had paid us three such strange visits, was no other a person than an evil spirit, commonly called the devil; which Muley could not understand, but supposed it was some bad character, and amused us by saying he would kill the debbel, the next time he made his appearance. We waited in hourly expectation of another visit from our unknown foe, keeping ourselves prepared for his reception, but he came not.

Alvaro was perfectly recovered, and was gay, lively, and entertaining, as usual; but my spirits became more and more depressed, which my father observing, desired my attendance in his closet.

I obeyed, when on entering he arose, seated me by his side, and retaining my hand within his, said—"My son is in want of some one to whom he can unburden

his mind ; where then will he find so fit a person as his father ?”

“ Nowhere,” I replied ; “ but I feared to afflict you.”

“ You will indeed afflict me,” said he, “ if you have a trouble which I must not share.”

I related to him the imperious conduct of Isidora and Isabella, when he interrupted me, saying—“ I see no great cause of complaint in this—you offended them, therefore they had a right to retaliate ; and with respect to your being banished from your mistress six months, which is the exact time you slighted her without cause, I think she is perfectly right, and has acted like a woman of spirit.”

“ I fear,” said I, “ she has too much spirit, and that is one cause of my uneasiness.”

“ Poh, poh !” replied my father ; “ a sensible woman will always study to make her husband happy, and no one can say Isidora is wanting in common sense. Answer

swer me one question—do you love any other woman better than her?”

“I do not,” was my answer; “nor do I think I love her sufficiently to marry her.”

“That violent passion which you call love borders on madness, and is not absolutely necessary to produce happiness in the married state; besides, if you disliked the lady, you would not be so chagrined at being forbidden her sight for six months: all this will end favourably,” said my father, smiling.

“My chagrin arose from wounded pride,” I rejoined; “but I have another thorn which pricks me to the heart: it is the command of the queen to part from Alvaro, and send him back to his native shore.”

“This is what I expected—this is what I foresaw, from the beginning of your attachment,” answered my father. “I knew her majesty’s hatred to the Africans, whom she looks upon as the invaders of her rights, and would suppose her throne be-

gan to totter if an African is suffered to breathe the air of Spain. Alvaro is, in every respect, a man of honour, whom I esteem as if he was my own son, but at the same time regret that he did not leave Andalusia without the interference of the queen, whose restless spirit will know no peace so long as he is here."

"Do you mean then," I asked, "to part with him?"

"It must be so," answered my father, "though I owe him my life; and with respect to sterling virtue, I shall never find his equal; yet we must part, for after the command of the arbitrary Isabella, his life would not be safe were we to suffer him to remain here."

I saw my father was right, and that if I wished to preserve the life of my friend, I must hasten him out of the kingdom.

"We will not wound his feelings," said my father, "we will not inform him of the order of the queen; but as I think both your lives in danger, on account of some
secret

secret enemy who seems lurking about our castle, you shall accompany him to Africa, and spend your time there with him, till your offended mistress thinks fit to recall you."

"And leave you to be murdered here?" said I; "no, no—I cannot consent to leave my beloved father to the poniard of an unknown foe."

"Fear not for me," replied the duke; "only act as I direct, and all may yet be well."

"Oh, say that you will go with us!" I eagerly exclaimed.

"That is not in my power," said he; "for if I-was, it would arouse the suspicion of the queen, and we know not where the evil would end."

I knew my father had not erred in one of his remarks, but could not bring myself to leave him with any degree of tranquillity, and know not whether I had or had not a presentiment of the miseries which ensued, in consequence of my ac-

companying my friend to Africa; but yet the impulse was not strong enough to induce me to refuse; and in a fatal moment I yielded to the entreaties of my much-loved parent.

Alvaro was highly diverted at the idea of being sent away on account of his own personal safety, for he feared not death in any shape, and made several facetious remarks on the care of the duke, for fear his adopted son should be killed.

My servant Carlo was fidelity itself, and I left him with my father, with strict injunctions not to leave him night or day, entreating the duke to let him sleep in his apartment, and allow a strong guard to be placed in the antechamber, which, to quiet my fears, he consented to.

Preparations were made for our departure, and on the fourth day after my arrival at the castle, we went on board one of our vessels, when we were wafted by a light gale to that shore, where I experienced the pinnacle of joy, and the depth
of

of misery. Even at this distant period the recollection curdles the blood in my veins, and harrows up my soul to agony. But I must stifle my feelings, or I shall not be able to go on with my history.

After I had parted from my father, the pressure on my spirits hourly increased, notwithstanding the cheerful companion I had in my valued friend Alvaro, who rallied me by frequently saying, I had left my heart in the Escorial at Madrid.

We landed on the coast of Barbary, which is that part of Africa nearest to Spain. Some parts of Africa are extremely fruitful, on account of the overflowings of the rivers Nile and Niger, which fertilize the adjacent country, and make amends for the large tracts of uncultivated lands forming the deserts, whose sands are so loose, that by a strong wind they are raised to a considerable height, and in their descent have buried hundreds of people at a time, who travel in large compa-

nies, on account of the wild beasts which inhabit these deserts, the principal of which is Zaara.

Morocco was inhabited by Alvaro and his followers, which is a fine part of the country, about five hundred miles in length, and four hundred and eighty in breadth: it is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the kingdom of Algiers, on the south by the desert of Zahara, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The coast was covered by the tribes of blacks belonging to Alvaro, who constantly kept that station, which made it impossible for an enemy to land without observation; they were always prepared for an attack, by having quivers full of arrows slung at their backs, and bows in their hands.

These faithful creatures, on espying our vessel, placed themselves on the defensive; as they were ignorant of their leader being on board; but on seeing their beloved chief land on his native shore, they to a
man

man prostrated themselves at his feet; then leaping up, rent the air with acclamations, and ran about, as if they were intoxicated with joy.

I could not help admiring the unfeigned affection of these artless people, nor did I wonder, considering who was their leader; for Alvaro, though young, acted the part of a father and friend to all his followers. They eyed me askance with some distrust, which their chief perceiving, took me by the hand, and presented me to them, at the same time laying his other hand on his heart, to indicate I had a place there; on which many of them nodded their approbation, and prostrated themselves at my feet, which is their manner of swearing allegiance.

I was much pleased with the country of Africa, which is one of the four grand divisions of the world, bounded on all sides by seas, except the isthmus of Suez, by which it is joined to Asia, the Mediterranean being on the north, the Atlantic

Ocean on the west and south, and the Indian Ocean and Red Sea on the east.

The Atlas mountains, which are a grand work of an Almighty Hand, strike the beholder with awe, being of great extent, reaching from Morocco to Egypt: the Mountains of the Moon, which are so called from their extreme height, are no less deserving notice, though but little of them is known.

The beautiful country of Barbary consists of the coast of Africa, from Egypt to the Straits of Gibraltar, and from thence to the utmost bounds of the kingdom of Morocco on the ocean. Barbary is parted from Biledulgerid by a long ridge of mountains——But I am trespassing on your patience by this digression, and will return to my narrative, and beg your indulgence for dwelling too long on that country, which gave birth to the greatest treasure that ever fell to the lot of man.

Muley did not fail to receive his share of congratulation, for each of his fellow-blacks

blacks seemed as if in him they had found an only brother.

After Alvaro and I had partaken of some of their refreshments, they crammed Muley with every thing they thought good, till I began to fear it would be his last meal. These simple people testified their joy by dancing and capering round their old friend.

They are remarkably swift of foot, and without waiting for orders, some of them had disappeared, and after an absence of three hours, returned with a beautiful elephant, the favourite animal of Alvaro, and the very same he was mounted on when I saved his life in the last battle, by warding off the blow aimed at him by one of our soldiers; and that action was the beginning of a friendship which lasted for life, and, I doubt not, will be renewed after death; for if any man could *deserve* heaven, it was Alvaro. The intelligent beast instantly knew his master, licked his hands, drawing him still closer with its

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trunk;

trunk; then, without bidding, kneeled, that Alvaro might mount with greater ease.

The friendship between the beast and his master seemed reciprocal, as the latter scarcely knew how to caress his favourite Achmet enough, for he had called the animal after a faithful slave, who fell in battle. The elephant no sooner felt the welcome burden of his master on his back, than he set off with incredible swiftness for so large a creature, as if he was impatient to restore Alvaro to the arms of his family. I mounted another, and followed my friend, attended by a great number of blacks, with Muley at their head, who was much respected by his brethren, on account of his strong attachment to his master.

We took our way along the shore, till arriving at a thick impervious wood, we struck into it, which afforded us a welcome shade from the scorching rays of the sun; for the heat, though great in Spain, is still greater in Africa, as the most parts of it lie under the torrid zone: however, the
coasts

coasts in general are very fruitful, and the plants extraordinary : its productions are honey, wax, oil, sugar, hides, dates, almonds, fruit, gum, camels, elephants, all sorts of wild beasts, and gold.

Alvaro was assuring me of a hearty welcome, when I perceived through the foliage of the trees an elephant approaching, beautifully caparisoned with gold trappings, led by two blacks ; and a light female figure, in a reclining posture, was placed on its back. As they came nearer Alvaro espied them, exclaiming—" This is too much—she has been beforehand with me : " then leaping off his beast, was instantly beside the lady, whom he assisted to alight, and they were fast locked in each other's arms.

I kept at a little distance, and for the first time in my life envied my friend. He folded his arms round the most exquisitely-formed being I ever beheld. She was clad in a leopard skin, girt round the waist with a gold cord, wearing blue silk sandals,

dals, broad gold bracelets, with a scarf of light blue silk, fringed with gold, thrown across one shoulder, and her hair confined within a gold net, except a stray lock which had broke loose, and wantonly played in the breeze.

As Alvaro seemed pòsessed of such a mistress, I was astonished he had not confided the circumstance to me: whichever way she turned, her form was symmetry itself, for grace was in every attitude, lustre in her eye, and affection in her smile. Such was the creature my friend clasped in silent ecstasy! Oh, how I envied him his situation! oh, how I envied him those sweet embraces!

I had dismounted, but stood like a statue fixed to the spot, admiring this prodigy of the work of nature, this masterpiece of all that was lovely, when Alvaro advanced, leading her in his hand, saying—
“Acasto, allow me to introduce you to——”

He stopped, for I turned away my head, feeling that I dare not take another look,
and

and that I must instantly return to Spain, or dishonour my friend. If I was enchanted with the sight of her at a distance, I was still more so on a nearer view of her; for her eyes were bright as stars; her teeth white as the elephant's; her lips red as coral, and the witchery of her smile, assisted by the dimples which played around her mouth, enough to rob any man of his senses.

My friend was surprised at my behaviour, saying—"Surely Acasto is not offended at my introducing him to——" and again stopped short; when I whispered to him—"It must not be, Alvaro; if you mean to keep her for your own, you must not trust me with the sight of her again."

My friend burst into a loud laugh, and putting the hand of the blushing creature within mine, said—"Acasto, my sister Kora."

Thunder-struck, I started, exclaiming—"Your sister!" I could say no more, for
surprise

surprise struck me dumb. Alvaro enjoyed my confusion, for he laughed so violently, that he was obliged to lean against a tree for support; while I stood unable to extricate myself out of the most awkward situation imaginable.

The lady was the most collected of the three, and turning to her brother, said—
“What is the meaning of this excessive mirth?”

“The meaning is,” he replied, “that my friend is so terrified at the uncommon ugliness of your features, that he insists on returning to his own country, where the ladies are infinitely more beautiful than you, and begs he may never see you a second time.”

“That he never shall,” said the lovely creature, “if he will only accept my thanks for preserving the life of my beloved brother.”

“Alvaro,” I exclaimed, “I did not think you had been so malicious; I did not

not believe you had had so much mischief in you."

"Come, my dear girl," said he, taking her hand, "I must not disgust this proud Spaniard any longer with the sight of your disagreeable person; you must remount your beast, and we will make the best of our way to our dwelling."

The lady did so with inimitable grace, and drawing the silk curtains of her canopy, totally hid herself from my view.

I stood biting my lips, with my arms folded, and stamping with vexation, exclaimed—"For Heaven's sake, Alvaro, what is it you mean?"

He laughed till he could not stand, and at last said—"Come, come, man, do not put yourself in a passion about a woman!"

"Passion!" I echoed—"I shall go mad. I could rage, storm, tear my flesh off my bones with passion!"

"And what good would that do?" he asked.

"Do not put such a question to me, for

for I have not sense enough to make a rational answer," said I. "Oh, Alvaro, how could you play me such a trick?"

"Merely for the sake of fun," he replied. "But prithee, man, mount, and do not keep the lady waiting any longer; for you have already given her such a specimen of the politeness of Spanish nobles, which she will not forget as long as she lives."

"Oh, thou monument of mischief," I sighed, "I did not think thou hadst such roguery within thee!"

We mounted our beasts, and followed the lady's elephant, led by the two blacks, when I kept my eye steadily fixed on the canopy, in hopes the curtains would blow apart, and give me another peep at her. But no gentle breeze would stand my friend, no pitying gale would aid my prying sight, and waft those cursed curtains aside; for I afterwards found they were fastened down inside by gold rings. Alvaro perceiving my intention, said—"Ay, ay,

ay, man, stare on ; but if you get sight of her in a hurry, her name is not Kora."

" I will see her," I replied, " if it costs me my life ; I will endeavour to remove the ill impression you have given her respecting me ; for on account of my being so dazzled by her beauties, you took advantage of me, by giving a wrong colour to the surprise I was thrown into ; for, supposing her to be the mistress of your heart, I honestly desired I might not be tempted to supplant my friend, by being trusted with another view of her."

" How came you to suppose she was my mistress ?" he asked.

" Was it possible for me to imagine you had such a lovely creature for your sister, when you never but once slightly mentioned her ?" said I.

" Because I would rather see her happy than great," he replied, " which is the reason I seldom name her, or let her be seen, for I should be better pleased if she would choose herself a husband out of one of our tribes,

tribes, than to see her splendidly miserable. It was my intention you should never see her, and you may attribute it entirely to chance that threw her in your way; for her strong affection to her brother induced her to come and meet us, which accident I neglected to guard against, and which I severely reproach myself for."

"Do you mean to insinuate," said I, "that I have seen her for the last time?"

"I do indeed," he answered.

"Alvaro," said I, "is this the conduct of a friend?"

"Yes," he replied, "of the truest friend that ever man had. My regard for you is too great to suffer you to plunge into difficulties headlong, without trying to save you."

I sighed, but spoke not; for his last remark had thrown me into a train of reflections, which presented nought but insurmountable obstacles at every turn.

We silently rode on, till I perceived on the skirts of the wood a low, white, stone building,

building, which Alvaro pointing out as his home, said—"Cheer up, my friend, for I will introduce you to another lady, whom you shall see as often as you please."

The house was only one story high, on which account it stood on an amazing large piece of ground; for in these hot climates the dwellings are always low. It was a most desirable retreat, being shaded by the trees of the forest on one side, and the tenements of the slaves belonging to the household of the chief on the other sides.

To my great mortification, the elephant of the beauteous Kora was led round to a different part of the building, so that at the moment I expected my wishes to be gratified with once more beholding her, she seemed lost to me for ever.

Alvaro alighted, and giving me his hand, welcomed me to his home—welcomed me to the hearts of his people, who came out in crowds to receive and bless their master.

He

He led me through innumerable apartments, indeed so many, I thought he was shewing me the interior of the building ; till stopping at a door, he entered, desiring a female slave to apprize her mistress of his arrival ; but not having patience to wait her return, followed into the inner apartment, and leaving the door a little open, gave me a view of a fine woman, seated on a low cushion. He was instantly at her feet, when the lady shrieked violently, and was unable to speak, till a flood of tears relieved her, when the exclamations of—" My son !"—" My beloved mother !" unravelled the mystery.

As soon as their feelings were a little subsided, he conducted me into the apartment, saying—" Mother, allow me to introduce the duke of Andalusia's son to your notice."

" Oh," said the lady, " do I live to see the preserver of my Alvaro? do I live to thank this young man for saving a life more dear to me than my own? Was I
to

to exist a thousand years, the time would be too short to express my gratitude!"

"Lady," said I, "there is none due, for I have been the greatest gainer, as your son is the only man I know whom I deem worthy the name of friend."

"May this friendship remain unbroken through life!" said she, joining our hands.

There was something peculiarly interesting in the mother of Alvaro, for she was descended from a noble family of Spain, and fled persecution, with great numbers of her countrymen, who settled on the spot I now beheld them on; she was possessed of dignity without pride, condescension without servility, and fascination without art. I was not now surprised at the great powers of pleasing to be found in my friend Alvaro, when I saw he had been reared by such a mother as Leonetta. The last five-and-twenty years of her life had been dedicated to the care of her children and dependents, who almost seemed to idolize her. She had
been

been destined by her parents to take the veil, but her strong, reflecting mind, convinced her, at the age of sixteen, of the impiety in taking so solemn an oath, when her heart was solely engaged by the affectionate regard of a young noble, with whom she escaped from her convent, and to whom she gave her hand. You may naturally suppose that this young man was the father of my friend, which was the case.

Time passed delightfully in the society of my hostess and her son, but yet there was one thing wanting—there was something which I was constantly craving after, and dared not mention: it was that beautiful little witch Kora, whose image had been floating in my brain from the first moment I saw her. I had at this period been three weeks with my friends, and in all that time had not seen or heard any thing of Kora; she was never mentioned, nor could I find out where they had hid her.

Alvaro

Alvaro had occasion to go further into the interior of the country, and appointed me to be his deputy, to superintend the comforts of those old slaves who had grown grey in the service of his family, giving me a strict injunction to take peculiar care of his mother.

“Would to Heaven,” said I, “you had left your sister under my care also!”

“I do not doubt it,” he replied, laughing; “but you need not make yourself uneasy about her; she is perfectly safe, which I dare say by this time you are convinced of.”

“To my unspeakable sorrow I am,” said I, shaking my head.

My friend, having previously taken leave of his parent, shook me by the hand, saying—“Let me see Acasto act worthy of his high descent, worthy of his noble father.” He mounted his favourite Achmet, and rode off.

I admired the strict honour of this young man, who totally excluded his sis-

ter from my sight, for fear of an attachment taking place between us, as he would have deemed her a dishonourable match for the duke of Andalusia's son.

I was one day walking with Leonetta, in a grove of pomegranates, which led from the house to a beautiful bath, when I carelessly asked her if Alvaro was her only child?

"No," said she; "I have another equally dear to my heart as he is."

"Why then," I artfully asked, "is your other son not with you?"

"It is not a son," she answered, "but a daughter; and if I mistake not, Acasto has seen her."

I felt confusion mantling to my face, for I had attempted to deceive her, by pretending not to know any thing of this daughter, and making my apology, said—"You must let the extreme beauty of Kora plead my excuse."

"I will accept of such an excuse from Acasto only," replied Leonetta; "for he
can

can demand of me but one thing which I would withhold from him."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"It is my child," she answered.

"Yet that child is the only gift Acasto would stoop to crave; for, in his opinion, creation dwindles into nothing in comparison with her," I observed.

"Honour commands us to deny you," said she; "besides, my son informs me you are betrothed to a relation of the king of Spain: how then can you stoop so low as to fix your mind on my simple Kora?"

"Because she would add lustre to a throne," said I. "Oh, lady, let that compassion which is a constant inmate of your breast plead in my behalf, and lead you to grant my request, by once more indulging me with the sight of your lovely daughter!"

"It must not be," answered Leonetta. "To what purpose do you wish for an interview with her?"

"To remove from her mind the ill impression

pression which Alvaro gave, respecting myself," said I.

"Which impression we wish to remain," observed the lady; "for you must remember, you are not at liberty to choose for yourself."

"Would to Heaven I was!" I replied.

"Since then you are not," she said, "let me see that you have sufficient command over yourself to act honourably; and let this be the last time you either think of, or mention, my innocent Kora."

I feared my case was quite hopeless, for I found the mother to be as inflexible as the son. I dared not question any of the slaves, for I knew it would lessen me in the esteem of my friends, and I likewise saw the fidelity of the slaves was not to be shaken. In this hopeless situation I remained another week, when Alvaro returned, to the great joy of his mother and myself. He perceived an alarming alteration in my health, and anxiously inquired the cause.

"You

"You know it too well," said I; "it is your inflexible honour which has occasioned my sufferings."

"Acasto," said he, "can I act otherwise? can I so requite the duke, who has been to me, in every sense of the word, a second father, as to suffer his son to form an alliance with the sister of an African chief? No, never!"

"Is your honour dearer to you than the life of your friend?" I asked.

"Say not thy valued life is in danger," he replied with emotion; "sting me not to the soul, with the reflection that I have occasioned thee one hour's uneasiness. Oh, Acasto, have some pity for your friend, whose situation is not more enviable than your own, and promise me to shake off this new-formed passion."

"It is impossible," I answered, "for it consumes my very life."

"Surely," said he, "you could not fall so desperately in love at the first glance! Consider, it is not in your power to make

my sister an honourable offer; consider, if a marriage was to take place between you, it would deluge both countries in blood!"

"Alas! alas!" I exclaimed; "you but augment my miseries."

"Come, my young friend, you must not give way to despair," said Leonetta; "change of scene will relieve your mind; you shall go with Alvaro to Algiers, where I doubt not you will find many things to amuse you. I have for some time observed the change in your health, but dared not mention it, for fear an explanation should be displeasing to you: but now the worst is over, I trust you will exert that fortitude I know you to be possessed of, and try to make Alvaro and me happy."

I kissed her hand, saying—"I will do every thing in my power to add to the felicity of such valued friends, but cannot promise impossibilities."

"We are all short of penetration in this affair," Leonetta observed; "for we know not if Kora would be pleased with
the

the offer of your hand, were you at liberty to honour her so far."

This remark did me more good than any thing which could be urged, and I began to think it might be so; that after all I might not be so acceptable to the heart of so beautiful a creature.

Alvaro taking my hand, said—"Now I see we shall succeed—now I know Acasto will be himself again, and prove that he is worthy of the duke his father."

I could not refuse to strive to contribute to the peace of mind of this amiable son and mother, and assumed a cheerfulness which was foreign to my heart: but my melancholy would at times get the better of my resolution, which whenever my friends perceived, they would double their efforts to amuse me. It was on one of these occasions, that Alvaro had persuaded me to hunt with him, which was a diversion he was fond of. We had been some hours in quest of prey, and were returning disappointed, when we entered

the forest which led to his habitation, and espied a young tiger, sleeping under a large tree. We aroused the beast, and joined in full pursuit after, which so exasperated him, that his eyes glared fire. He took the road we had just passed, but after many turnings and windings, returned back again, darting in a straight course through the forest. We kept pretty close to him, but not near enough to wound him, when the shriek of a female assailed our ears, from the same direction the beast had taken. Horror-struck, we rode on, being confident whoever it was, their death was inevitable; when I perceived a female flying before the animal, which gained fast upon her. I instantly shot at the beast, though there was no chance of wounding the tiger without wounding the figure, who was in vain trying to escape; but there was no time for consideration, for the lady fell, and the wounded beast, howling, rolled over her. I then turned my attention to the lifeless figure on the ground,

ground, when on raising it up, found it to be my beloved, angelic Kora! What a situation was mine! She was covered with blood, and I had every reason to believe that I had been her executioner. I called upon her adored name, pressed ten thousand kisses on her lips, rubbed her cold hands, but could not perceive any signs of life.

I was seated on the ground, with the beloved object clasped close to my heart, when Alvaro and his followers came up. —“Ye gods,” said he, “it is my sister!”

I spoke not, for I looked upon myself as her murderer; and Alvaro, taking her out of my arms, was almost as distracted as myself.

The slaves seemed more collected, for one of them opened a vein in her arm with a small knife he had in his pocket, which restored her to life: but they could not bring me to my senses again; for I was so horrified at the thought of having shot her as well as the beast, that it took

such full possession of me as to make my brain feel on fire. I was so stupified that I paid no attention to the entreaties of my friend, who was obliged to act for me; and seating me on his own mule, placed the yet almost inanimate Kora on mine, walking between us, and we alternately shared his attention; but I was insensible to every thing around me.

In this manner we arrived at Alvaro's mansion, when the first person who met us was his mother, who was directing some of the slaves to go in search of her daughter. Alvaro had now to exert himself on account of his mother, who felt all that a mother could feel, on beholding her daughter in such a condition; and he was some time before he could convince her Kora was not wounded; but that the blood on her dress had flowed from the tiger which I had killed, just time enough to save her life.

This affectionate parent hailed me as the preserver of both her children; but, as

I was

I was afterwards informed, her encomiums were lost to me; for I was still in the state I before described. They carried me in, laid me on a couch, where I raved on the name of my beloved, frequently shewing my hands, which I insisted were dyed by the blood of Kora; for my fever raged with unvarying violence. Alvaro was constantly by my side, assisted by the faithful Muley; and whenever Leonetta could leave the couch of her suffering Kora, she was by the side of mine.

The illness of the object of my heart arose from the effects of fright; but she was not in the extreme danger I was, and became much sooner convalescent. It was at this period I experienced the tender assiduities of a mother; for Leonetta discharged those duties to me, in the strictest sense; and one day perceiving my disorder had spent its force, she took my hand, saying to Alvaro—"My son, there will be no way of convincing this obstinate young Spaniard of the mistake he
1877 1

lies under, but by suffering Kora to be sometimes with him."

"I doubt," observed my friend, "the experiment would be dangerous."

"Whether it should prove so or not," replied his mother, "we must risk the trial; for we cannot do too much for one who has so singularly served us as he has done."

"My mother knows I never yet thought her wrong," said Alvaro, "and whatever she wills or says, in my opinion, must be right; therefore lead the dear girl in."

I did not understand the whole of this discourse, but I heard the name of Kora, which was sufficient to occupy my thoughts; and I was trying to recollect whether she was dead or not, when the door opened, and the beloved object of my heart stood by my side. I looked at her for some moments, and taking her hand, which trembled within mine, exclaimed—"She lives then!"

The lovely creature looked at me with
angelic

angelic pity; then bursting into a flood of tears, hid her face on her mother's shoulder.

"Why this excess of feeling, my child?" said Leonetta.

"Oh, my mother, why did not you prepare me for the change?" asked the beautiful mourner—"why did not you tell me he was on the borders of the grave?"

There is not one feature left of what I saw when I first met him in the wood! He will die, my mother—he will die, and then your Kora will never know happiness again."

"And is Acasto so blest as to have an interest in the heart of Kora?" I asked.

"Oh," said the artless maid, clasping her hands, "live—for my sake, try to live!"

"I am in perfect health!" I exclaimed; "thine enchanting voice has called me from the tomb!"

"My sister had better retire," said Alvaro. "This was what I feared—this was what I dreaded," continued he, walking up and down the room.

The

The lovely creature withdrew, when her beauty seemed heightened by her blushes. The fact was, that Kora, in the innocence of her heart, had let me into a secret which had been carefully guarded from me; and which, owing to the alteration she saw my illness had occasioned, she in an unguarded moment let slip; for her artless manner and agitation convinced me I was not indifferent to her.

From that moment I rapidly amended; and from that hour the uneasiness of Alvaro increased. He took my hand, saying—"I will trust to the honour of my friend that no advantage will be taken, for he is not at liberty to act as his noble heart would dictate, were he left unshackled by those engagements to the lady Isidora."

The name of this lady was like a thunderbolt in my ears, and threw me back upon all my miseries.

Leonetta, perceiving the change in my countenance, said—"We will talk this subject over another time, but at present I

must

must entreat my patient will not turn his thoughts to any thing but what will tend to his recovery ;” and Alvaro going out of the room, she added—“ Shall I repeat poor Kora’s last request ?”

“ It is unnecessary,” I replied, “ for her words still vibrate on my heart.”

In the course of conversation, I found Kora had been concealed ever since my arrival in a remote part of the building, which had a beautiful garden attached to it—that she never left this retirement but when Alvaro and I were engaged in the chase ; when at these times she embraced her favourite recreation of strolling into the forest, and it was during one of these rambles I saved her from the fangs of the tiger we were pursuing.

“ If chance should again throw her in your way,” said Leonetta, “ I shall not be apprehensive that any ill consequences will ensue, for I am well aware you will always bear in mind that you are destined for another.”

“ Too

“Too well I feel I am destined for destruction,” I thought.—I told Leonetta not to debar me the sight of her daughter, for I would give my word of honour I would not make her an offer which it was not my intention to fulfil. She seemed satisfied with this promise, but saw not the double *entendre* I had made use of.

Alvaro had business which called him to Algiers, and, taking an affectionate leave, left me to the care of his mother, as I was not sufficiently recovered to accompany him.

Leonetta suffered compassion to overcome her prudence, and sometimes indulged me with the society of Kora.

It was now that the moments seemed to fly too swiftly, and I dreaded the return of my best friend Alvaro.

I had declared my passion to Kora, who entreated me never to mention it again.—“Were you at liberty,” said the artless girl, “I perhaps might listen to you; but
as

as circumstances are, let me beg you will for ever seal your lips on the subject."

"Then it is plain you love me not," I observed.

"Yon moon can witness for me to the contrary," answered the maid; "for she has nightly listened to my plaint, and heard my unceasing regrets that I had ever met the young Acasto!"

"If then it is, as you say, grant me a proof of it, by promising never to give your hand to another?" I exclaimed.

"That promise I will rigidly perform," she answered.

"One more favour grant, and make me for ever blest, by bestowing this loved hand on me," said I, still holding it within mine.

The maid looked steadfastly at me, withdrew her hand, and silently retired.

Three days elapsed, and I saw her not. On the fourth she appeared, pale, dejected, ill. I eagerly inquired the cause, when she replied—"I am come to beg the cause

may

may not be repeated—I am come to entreat the subject of our last conversation may never be mentioned again.”

“It never shall, in your hearing,” I said, “for I am going to return to Gibraltar for ever.”

“For ever?” she asked.

“Yes,” I answered, “for ever! To what purpose would it be for me to remain here, save but to witness your sufferings, and increase my own?” I saw a silent tear stray down her cheek, and taking her hand, said—“Why will not you consent to make me and yourself happy?”

“Because,” she sighed, “there is no happiness for either of us, on this side the grave.”

“Then you will persist in driving me from you for life?” I asked.

“Oh, say not for so long a period!” she answered; “say that we shall meet again sometime! and the thought of that may probably enable us to support a separation.”

“We may meet in heaven,” said I;
“and

“and if I mistake not, the period will soon arrive ;” placing a pistol to my head.

“Oh, forbear ! Live, and I am yours !” she shrieked, and fell senseless at my feet.

I was little better than her, for my feelings were wound up to such a pitch of frenzy, that, had she hesitated a moment longer, I should have discharged the pistol, and rushed unbidden into eternity.

On raising her up, she slowly recovered, and with a deep sigh, said—“Is Acasto safe ?”

“Safe and happy,” I answered ; “free from the crime of suicide, and happy in the love of Kora.”

I found it difficult to calm her mind, notwithstanding I begged, soothed, and entreated her to leave all to me.

“Your rashness has extorted that promise from me, which, I fear, will be fatal to us both,” she observed ; “I shudder at the consequences which may follow !”

“Fear not, thou stranger to deceit,” said I, clasping her to my heart ; “the wife

wife of Acasto shall know nought but felicity."

The shades of night coming on apace, we returned to the house, for this interesting conversation had taken place in a small alcove, situated in the beautiful garden belonging to Kora, where she had gambolled through the innocence of her infant years—where she had, child like, been amused with pursuing a feather driven before the wind, and where she had now, by consenting to be mine, made me the happiest of human beings.

I was in a delirium of joy not to be described, for my regard for Kora appeared to increase at every fresh interview. She one day asked me how it happened that I had changed my sentiments respecting her, from the most violent disgust to the purest love?

I smiled, and asked her for an explanation.

"Do you not recollect," said she, "when you first saw me in the wood, how shocked
you

you was at the disagreeableness of my person, and begged my brother would not disgust you with a second sight of me?"

I laughed most heartily, saying—"And did you believe my wicked friend Alvaro?"

"Certainly I did," she answered, "and kept out of your way, for fear you should take a still greater dislike to me."

"I did not think the rogue's plan had succeeded so far," said I; "but now my beloved is convinced of the mischievous trick he played me."

It was not the first time I had been made acquainted with the artlessness of my Kora; for, however unaccountable it may appear, it was a fact, she was a perfect stranger to her own loveliness, which in my eyes rendered her more lovely still. I have heard say, that perfect felicity never dwelt on earth; but I must here contradict the assertion—for though it might not be permanent, yet I enjoyed it at this period in real perfection.

69 Shortly after this Alvaro returned, and
MOY a little

a little damped my serenity, for he met me glowing with the sincerest friendship, while I greeted him with an accusing conscience, which told me I had acted towards him with duplicity; that I had stolen from him a treasure which he valued beyond price, in beguiling him of his beloved sister; that I was not the man of honour he took me for; that I was unworthy the friendship of a heart like his. He saluted me with his usual urbanity, was rejoiced to see me recovered, and attributed my unaccountable reception of him to a lassitude he supposed was left on my spirits by my recent illness.—“Wretch that I am!” I sighed, “shall I plunge this man of worth into the only calamity he dreads? shall I so requite his long-trying friendship? No! I will fly this idol of my soul, I will return to my father.—And leave Kora to pine in secret?” said reflection on the other hand—for I beheld the maid coming up a walk shaded by pines to meet me; “shall she suffer?”
said

said I to myself; "no, no, let all creation mourn, so she escapes!"

One glimpse of her was sufficient to throw down all my new-formed resolutions.—"I have sought you," she said, "to ask one favour, which, owing to the agitation I was thrown into the moment I consented to be yours, I forgot to request."

"Name it," said I.

"It is," she replied, "that you will not insist on the fulfilment of my promise, should my brother be averse to the match."

"Is this a proof of your love?" I asked; "is this worthy the exalted mind of Kora? to give her consent, and then retract? Oh, 'tis too much! Alas! alas! I too plainly see I have deceived myself, and there is no room in the cold heart of Kora for the lost Acasto!"

She burst into tears, saying—"Judge me not too harshly—you know the extreme delicate honour of my brother."

"On which account," said I, "he will
never

never consent to our union; and the only proof you can give me of a sincere attachment is, to agree to a private marriage."

"If you will accept of no other," she said, "then I must yield; though it is acting against my duty and my judgment."

I dried her tears, and having soothed her mind, was again restored to tranquillity.

Leonetta was ignorant of the promise I had obtained from her daughter, and in that ignorance was happy; she behaved to me with the kindness of a mother, which added to my comfort, for I was a stranger to the soft attentions of my own, having lost her in my infancy. There is something peculiarly fascinating in the delicate attentions of the female sex, which I had been unaccustomed to in the castle of my father, as he became a widower shortly after my birth.

I proposed Alvaro should accompany me on a visit to my father, which he declined, on account of business that required his attendance again at Algiers—"But I
advise

advise you to go by all means," said he, "if it is only to tell the duke that absence has strengthened the regard of his adopted son; and should you meet with my old acquaintance in the brazen mask, give my best compliments to him, and tell him I hope the time will come when I shall pay him my respects in person."

We were a little facetious at the expense of our old visitor, and I set off in high spirits, my friend and his mother having made me promise to return to them as soon as possible.

There was little cause to suppose I should be long absent, when Kora was the magnet that drew me to their coast, for she alone knew the object of my visit to Gibraltar; for having slyly taken leave of her, I went on board a beautiful vessel belonging to Alvaro, and was safely landed on my native shore, where I once more admired the old friendly rock, which stood like a wall of defence on one side the castle of Andalusia.

Our servants crowded round me, who created quite an uproar in expressing their joy at my unexpected arrival; and Carlo went to inform the duke, lest my sudden appearance should surprise him too much. He received me with true parental affection, congratulated me on my good looks, anxiously inquired after his youngest son, as he called Alvaro, and added—"Much as I esteem that youth, I am thankful he does not accompany you."

My father smiled at the message of my friend, particularly that part relating to the Mask, saying—"You may tell Alvaro I am not anxious for either of my sons' society; for as you are the occasion of such bad company coming to the castle, I think you are better away."

"Upon my word, you are excessively polite," said I, "to compliment me thus on my landing!"

"I shall be still more so," he observed, "and send you back in a few days, as I deem it unsafe to let you remain here."

I was

I was thankful to find my father had not once been molested by our troublesome visitor since I went to Africa. He said he had heard many times from Madrid upon state affairs, but the lady Isidora and I were not once mentioned.—“Here is a letter for you,” he continued, “which I think, by the handwriting, is from our kinsman Sebastian.”

On opening it, I found it was, and felt much amused with the contents, which ran, as nearly as I can recollect, in the following manner:—

“DEAR ACASTO,

“I fear you will have some cause to triumph over me, for I cannot say, with respect to your mistress, that I have been completely successful; but do not exult yet, for though a little crest-fallen, I do not despair. She is the most difficult riddle I ever met with in my life, and for the soul of me, I cannot comprehend her.

Sometimes her conduct places me on the highest pinnacle of hope, and at others abases me to an abject state of humility, when I am, without having given any known cause of offence, forbidden her sight; and then, without reason, taken into favour again. If ever there was a devil of a woman, it is Isidora! she will neither have me nor let me alone; she will not accept the offer of my hand, nor send me about my business; but a time may come when I shall make this tigress tremble! Yes, Acasto, notwithstanding all, I am determined to persevere, for the greater the difficulty, the more glorious the conquest; therefore do not laugh at present, for who knows but I may rise victorious? I am kept totally in the dark about you; for when I have tried to learn Isidora's intentions respecting you, she, with a haughty air, commands me to be silent on the subject. The queen idolizes her as much as ever, and has almost turned her brain by excessive indulgence.

Perhaps

Perhaps it may fall to my lot to bring this proud beauty to her senses. Her majesty is, as usual, the *primum mobile* of the grand machine of government, and the king, good soul, understands nothing else but submitting to the will of his wife. Heaven take such husbands! say I; for if there were many of them, they would ruin all the women in the universe. Mind, this is *entre nous*, for the secrets of a court are not fit to be canvassed by the public. I am such an altered, captive slave, such a miserable, abject wretch, owing to the tyranny of this woman, that you will find it difficult to recognise your kinsman,

“SEBASTIAN.”

I was highly diverted with the mortification of Sebastian, whose boasting of his powers to subdue the most high-spirited lady in the court of Spain knew no bounds, and was comforted on another account; for knowing more of the caprice of Isidora

than any one else, I saw, or fancied I saw, that he stood a much greater chance of success than he supposed. This prospect of affairs elated me beyond belief, and my father congratulated me on the high flow of spirits I was in, which he attributed to my having spent so much time in the engaging society of Alvaro—"And to shew you," said he, "how much I respect that young man, I shall be glad of your return, loaded with the blessings of your father, which I beg you will share with him."

If there was a man void of offence, if there was a character on earth without blemish, it was my universally-respected father.

Carlo entreated he might attend me; but I thought, in case of intruders, he would be useful to the duke, and chose the company of father Lopez, who had been my confessor from my youth.

"Should any thing occur to require your presence here," said the duke, "I shall send some of the servants across the
Strait,

Strait, to the Barbary coast, to inform you. As I was so disturbed with the bad company who followed you when last here, it will not be surprising if I am anxious for your departure, lest we should again be visited by the Brazen Mask."

I took leave of my father, who, had he known all that was passing in my mind, need not have been so solicitous for my return; for there was a loadstone on the shore of Barbary which would have drawn me from the caverns of the deep.

Lopez accompanied me on board, and a brisk gale filled the white sails of our little vessel, which scudded before the wind with unusual swiftness. Boreas blew another blast more strong, which split our mainsail, when the rising waves indicated a coming storm. We endeavoured in vain to repair the damage, for the wind blew a hurricane, and the waves rose higher than our vessel, which washed two of the blacks overboard. I threw out a rope that one of them caught

hold of, and saved his life; but the other poor fellow sunk, to rise no more. We were pretty well collected, considering our wretched situation, except Lopez the priest, who was incapable of rendering any assistance, and kept invoking his favourite saint. Another breaker took away our rigging, leaving us to the sport of the winds, which drove us, providentially, nearer the African shore. We made all the signals of distress we could; but the darkness of the night, increased by the storm, rendered our efforts unavailing. A third wave broke away our only hope, which was fixed on the boat, by snapping asunder the rope that fastened it to the vessel.

In this condition we remained all night, without the glimmer of a single star to cheer us. During this horrible night Lopez said to me—"My sen, I fear this indicates some further evil—I fear some one on board has, in an especial manner, incurred the wrath of Heaven! Confession,

sion, my son, may do much to avert the blow of death, and conscience will tell thee if *thou* art the man! Should it be so, once more place confidence in your long-tried friend Lopez, for there seems but a step between us and a watery grave."

I was struck with the good man's remark, and conscience stung me most keenly, for I accused myself with acting treacherously towards my honoured father and my best friend; but there was a stronger feeling kept me dumb—it was my love for Kora.

Day at last appeared, and gave me a view of our hopeless condition; for I plainly saw our vessel must soon go to the bottom, as she had sprung a leak, and was fast filling with water. We were in momentary danger of being dashed overboard by the violence of the waves, and, as may be supposed, had been kept continually drenched by them through the whole of the night. I proposed each should exert himself for his own preservation, and make

use of what rafts could be found ; but the blacks, who are capital swimmers, preferred plunging into the sea, which they did one after another. I was most distressed about Lopez, who could not swim, but persuaded him to let me tie him to a raft ; and in this manner I set him afloat in that part of the Mediterranean Sea commonly known by the name of the Gut, or Straits of Gibraltar.

I was the last who quitted the vessel ; and calling on the name of my beloved Kora, committed myself to the mercy of the waves. I buffeted them with nervous sinews, being an excellent swimmer, and, as my father used to say, almost amphibious ; for, as the rock of Gibraltar only divided our castle from the sea, I had had much practice in the art of swimming, which became an habitual amusement.

Whether Providence had reserved me for greater evils I know not ; but, strange as it may seem, though I was the last to quit the vessel, I was the first who reached

ed the African shore. The blacks kept coming in, one by one, who all declared they never struggled so hard for life before, owing to the roughness of the sea. We were much exhausted; and I was uneasy on account of the non-appearance of father Lopez, and held a consultation with my fellow-sufferers what course to take. One of them said he passed him, and attempted to lay hold of the raft, but the roughness of the sea bore it from him, driving it lower down towards the main ocean.

This was bad news indeed, for I was fearful of having doomed the poor creature to the misery of being starved to death, exposed, without shelter from the elements, on the wide ocean. We none of us had strength to follow him, being faint with fatigue and want of food, when the blacks espied some of their brethren, belonging to the forces of Alvaro, who constantly kept watch on the shore. They came towards us, with Muley at their
H 6 head,

head, who had been sent by his mistress, to see how the troops fared after the last tempestuous night.

Leonetta was a Christian in conduct, and not in word; for she had been reared a Catholic, and was thrown amidst a people who were strangers to the living God; yet, though she could not make them all understand the greatness of such a Being, they nevertheless shared her compassionate care, as if they had been followers of her own faith.

Muley had been left in care of his mistress and her household during the absence of Alvaro. He expressed both joy and sorrow on seeing me and his brethren, who had escaped the dangers of the storm—joy at our preservation, and sorrow at seeing us in the deplorable plight we were in, making us partake largely of some wine which Leonetta had sent by him for the comfort of the troops who had suffered during this boisterous night. I told him the dilemma I was in respecting Lopez, describing

describing the perilous situation he was in, when the faithful fellow tapped me on the shoulder, saying—"You never fear, massa Acasto, Muley can swim like one big fish; and me go into the Red Sea but me find him, for Lopez did tell me no fear de debbel."

He immediately plunged into the Mediterranean, having twisted a rope round his waist, and taking the course which the black directed him who last saw Lopez, was soon out of sight.

I knew perfectly well what Muley meant by saying that Lopez had told him not to fear the devil. These untaught blacks had some idea of an evil spirit, whom they used to worship by drawing hideous figures on walls, which they thought represented him, and never passed without making obeisance, and praying the figure not to harm them. While Muley was at the castle of Andalusia, Lopez endeavoured to give him some idea of the Creator, telling him to fear God,

and

and not Satan, which the poor creature did not thoroughly understand, but slapping his hands, said—"When me kill de debbel in de mask, den me no fear him."

We remained a long time on the beach, in expectation of Muley. Being impatient at his stay, I equipped myself in the clothes of the blacks, which consisted merely of the skin of a wild beast wrapped round the waist, reaching down to the knee, and leaving my own to dry, walked along the shore in the direction he had taken; and after having gone some distance, to my unspeakable joy I saw the faithful creature rapidly swimming to the shore, towing in the raft, having fastened one end of it to the rope, and the good old priest tied safely on, just as I committed him to the waves. Muley landed, and untying that part of the rope which was round his waist, drew the raft to shore, released poor Lopez, carried him in his arms, and seated him on dry ground, clapping the old man on the back, saying
—"Now,

—“Now, Lopez, you no fear de debbel, for he want to drown you, but Muley no let him; so good man no fear de debbel.”

The poor priest was unable to speak, and I hailed some of the blacks, who brought with them the remains of the wine, which revived the exhausted Lopez, and made the good-hearted Muley more merry than usual. Lopez poured forth sincere thanks to the Divine Being, and his friend Muley, for his miraculous preservation, assuring us he had given up all hope of being extricated from his perilous situation; and—“What think you,” said he to me, “would have been my situation, if, under these dreadful circumstances, I had had no God to flee to?”

Lopez was a pious, harmless creature; and, though not blessed with shining abilities, he acted up to what he professed. He was too weak to walk to the dwelling of the chief, for we had landed further off than usual, owing to the storm; so I left him in the care of Muley, and bent my
steps

steps to that habitation which contained the object of my heart, taking with me my other companions in distress. I passed the large tree where we first aroused the tiger in our last chase, and stopped at the well-remembered spot where I shot the beast, and knew not at that moment but I had shot my Kora also; even at this time I shudder at the recollection of my feelings when I raised her from the ground.

I travelled with all the speed my little remaining strength would allow, for every step I took brought me nearer to Kora, and arrived in a pitiable condition, as well as my fellow-sufferers; for, except the wine which Muley gave us, we had not tasted sustenance for thirty-six hours. Leonetta acted the part of the good Samaritan, seeing that we had every necessary comfort, and rejoiced at my preservation as if I had been her own son; but Kora felt too much to speak, answering only by her silent tears.

Leonetta sent some servants, with an elephant,

elephant, to convey father Lopez, as well as proper refreshments for him. She insisted on my retiring to rest, which was impossible for me to think of, as I had once more been blest with the sight of my beautiful girl, who I thought appeared more lovely than ever.

Lopez arrived, being more recruited than I expected to find him, and Leonetta was much pleased with her new visitor, giving him a sincere welcome to her home; but she lamented with me the loss of the unfortunate man who was washed overboard by the first wave at the commencement of the storm.

Not any thing occurred for several days, which time I employed in persuading Kora to let the priest join our hands, urging her to name an early day; but still found her backward, which was what I expected, knowing her native modesty so well. After a deal of entreaty, I mentioned that day week, which was her birthday, when she would complete her
sixteenth

sixteenth year; to which she, half denying, half yielding, reluctantly consented.

This may seem an early age for a young lady to marry, but it was not thought so in the country where Kora was born, for they marry much younger in hot climates than elsewhere.

Another obstacle arose, which I was not prepared for; it was the refusal of Lopez to join our hands, without the consent of Kora's friends and the sanction of the duke. I fetched him from our castle for this purpose only, and almost lost my life in bringing him over, never imagining but he would act as I directed. This threw me into a dilemma I knew not how to extricate myself out of, for the more I entreated, the more obstinate the old man was.

Leonetta delighted in his society, for he was the only priest she had met with, since she was driven out of her own country; and he was no less pleased with her, which militated much against my plan.

Lopez

Lopez repeatedly asked me how he could be guilty of such black ingratitude to those who had behaved to him so well. But he was not in love, and I was, which made a material difference in our circumstances.

I asked him if he had any regard for the duke?

"As much as one man can have for another," he answered.

"Then you are determined to leave him childless," I observed, vowing to put an end to my existence, if he refused to marry me and Kora at the time I mentioned. This alarmed him greatly, and he gave me a long lecture on my rashness, but to no purpose, for I kept to my resolution till I extorted from him a promise to comply.—"Besides," said I, "after all, it will be but a clandestine marriage, and those are as common as the sun at mid-day in Spain."

"They are so, my son," said Lopez,
"but

“but I do not like to serve my *friends* in a clandestine manner.”

I felt his rebuke stick in my throat, but chose to swallow it, not being in a situation to reply.

At last the wished-for day arrived, when morning zephyrs wooed my love to quit her couch, and led her to the lattice of her chamber, through which Sol had already shot his golden beams, and seemed to shine with unusual brightness. The slaves in crowds saluted her, and received from her hands their new habiliments for the ensuing year. On this day was held a kind of jubilee, for Kora was the idol of her tribe, and not a slave belonging to the family but hailed the anniversary of her birth as a day of revelry. At such a time as this, Zamba seemed more proud of her darling, whom she had reared, and pointing to her young mistress, would ask where her equal was to be seen; for Zamba had been nurse to Kora from the hour which gave her matchless beauty to
this

this wondering world. On this occasion, Leonetta's eyes would beam with strong maternal affection, as she raised them to Heaven, in thankfulness that her child had been spared to her another year; and Alvaro would hail his sister as the flower of his race.

Such had hitherto been the birthdays of Kora, till I, the spoiler, came and blasted all their peace.

The day closed in harmony, and each separated for the night. Lopez and I repaired to the alcove, which had been used by Leonetta as a sort of little chapel, where she had taught her charming daughter the principles of the Catholic faith; and where she, attended by the few slaves whom she had made comprehend some of the tenets of her religion, daily offered up her prayers and thanksgivings.

Since the arrival of Lopez, Leonetta had it in contemplation to completely fit up and adorn this little edifice, so as to serve for a place of worship. Hither we repaired

repaired to wait till midnight the coming of Kora, attended by the faithful Zamba, whom I had trusted with my intentions, because I saw her fondness for her young mistress was such, that she thought it impossible for her to do wrong; on which account I knew her secrecy might be depended on.

The intervening hours seemed lengthened into years, and I crept softly beneath the window of Kora, when I heard her say—"I dare not go, Zamba; I have an inward dread of I know not what, which seems to say 'forbear!'"

"Den you no love de Spaniard, missee?" asked the slave.

"I do with every faculty of my soul," was the reply.

"Why you no make him happy? Me love you; me do every ting you tell me," said Zamba. "Why you no marry de Spaniard when he tell you, and make him happy?"

"Because

“Because I am fearful of making my friends miserable,” answered her mistress.

I perceived it would not do to let the conversation continue, and said—“Haste, my beloved, Acasto waits: what makes Kora linger?”

The lattice opened, the timid maid descended a small flight of steps that led into the garden, and gave me her trembling hand, which I with rapture kissed, and conducted her up a walk bordered with melons on each side, to the alcove, followed by Zamba.

We entered, and father Lopez, as he was instructed, began the marriage ceremony. The thunder suddenly growled at a distance, which nearer and still nearer came, threatening destruction to man and beast; while the lightning's vivid flash, at times, so far illumined the little sanctuary, that had not the good priest have known the ceremony by heart, it would have lighted him to read the smallest print. The old man faltered, saying—“This union

union is against the will of Heaven, and I dare not proceed."

"Do you refuse?" said I.

"I have done," he answered, closing the book.

"Proceed, or die!" I exclaimed, holding a pistol to his head.

"Rash youth," said he, "fire! for sooner would Lopez resign his life, than go on when Heaven says 'stop!'"

Kora laid her hand on my arm, earnestly looked in my face, but did not speak, for terror had rendered her incapable; yet her dumb eloquence made me understand her wish, and clasping her to my heart, I threw the pistol away, saying—"Angelic creature! it was the thought of losing thee that made a maniac of me, for no human power shall prevent me possessing thy perfections.—Good Lopez," I continued, turning to him, "finish the ceremony: you perceive the storm has abated, and these convulsions of nature we are accustomed to in Spain as well as here."

He

He did not reply, but went through the form of marriage without interruption to the end, when I again heard the thunder threaten, and Lopez said—"My children, rise not till you have received the blessing of a poor aged man;" then laying a hand on the head of each, added—"If Heaven *can* bless a marriage under such peculiar circumstances, may it shower the choicest in its store on yours!"

A flash of lightning almost blinded us as we rose from our knees, and the warring elements seemed contending for the mastery. The trees surrounding the little building were torn up by the roots, or split from top to bottom. We fled out of it, thinking we should be safer in the open air, and had not got many paces from the place, ere a thunderbolt struck it level with the ground. The shock was so great, that we stood like so many statues, viewing the scene before us; but the priest was the first who was collected, and kneeling, prayed for protection on himself and

us, entreating for the mercy of Heaven to shield us through the storm of life.

Nature again was hushed in peace, when I kissed the silent tear off Kora's cheek, and led her into the house. From the time of my landing in Africa to the day of my marriage, it was exactly four months; yet I then thought not that the six months of my banishment from the court of Spain would shortly expire, for Kora was mine, and all besides her seemed to me as nothing.

The remaining two months flew on in bliss, and I had formed no settled plan for my future conduct, when an express arrived from my father, informing me that, contrary to his expectation, he had received no intelligence from Madrid concerning me, no mandate for my return, and asked my opinion how we should act.

I returned for answer, that as far as I could see, there was nothing to be done, but to wait in silence the issue of the event, and thought it better for me to remain

main where I was, for it seemed, when I was absent from our castle, our strange visitor was absent also.

I sent back the messenger, but felt a little uneasiness from this interruption; for I dreaded being torn from the wife of my bosom, who was all that an angel could be to an undeserving man; for the mind of my Kora was equal to the beauties of her person. You may suppose I might have continued safe in Africa from the persecutions of the court of Spain, but I knew better.

I endeavoured to quiet my mind with the hope that Sebastian had succeeded; and three months more rolled on in pleasure, when a servant arrived from Gibraltar with a letter, written in haste by my father, requesting my immediate return, having received an express from court, desiring to know why I had been absent nine months, instead of six; at the same time informing me, the messenger had or-

ders to escort me from the castle of Andalusia to the Escorial at Madrid.

Horror-struck at this news, I was mad enough to refuse to go, sending a verbal answer to that effect, which our servant unfortunately delivered to my father in presence of the king's messenger, who immediately set off to Madrid. The duke was thunderstruck at my conduct, and sent the vessel back, desiring an explanation; but before I could form an excuse, Carlo, arriving in another vessel, in a state of distraction, hastened on to the mansion of Alvaro, whom he met on the skirts of the forest, and communicated to him what he dared not impart to me. Alvaro sought, and found me.—“Acasto,” said he, “have I formed a wrong opinion of your heart?”

“Probably you have,” I answered, “if you think it faultless as your own.”

“I have had cause to esteem it still more so,” he observed; “nor will I believe but it is pure as the beams of the silver moon, till conviction proves to the contrary;

contrary; therefore tell me the reason of your disobeying the orders of the duke for your return to Gibraltar?"

I started, and remained silent.

"Will you trust me?" said he.

"Never," I replied.

"Shall I have to reproach Acasto with unfilial conduct," asked Alvaro, "to the best of fathers?"

"I fear you will," was my answer.

"Are you mad?" said he; "will you force me to bid you hence?"

"Do so," I replied; "let Alvaro forbid me his house, his shores, his country, and I will still remain."

"Then the duke is for ever lost!" he exclaimed; "but no, his adopted son will try to save him, if he perishes in the attempt!"

"What said you about my father?" I asked—"oh, what ails my father?"

"Ask this man," he answered, opening the door, and taking Carlo by the hand.

"Carlo," said I, "why came you here?"

“To bring the heaviest tidings that ever one man bore to another,” answered Alvaro, seeing that he hesitated.

“Carlo,” I exclaimed, “answer me—what of my father?”

“The duke is——” replied the man, and stopped.

“Dead?” I asked.

“No,” he answered; “but worse!”

“Can worse be?” I demanded.

“Speak, man,” said Alvaro; “nor conceal any thing from one who has no feeling for his father, and despises his friend!”

“The duke is—in the Inquisition,” said Carlo, and with these words deprived me of sense.

The assiduity of my friends brought me back to life, and to all the horrors of my situation, for I felt myself encircled by the arms of Kora, who had been in the room a silent auditress of what had passed, and was acquainted with all I wished to keep from her.—“Acasto lives,” she whispered, “and Kora cannot be miserable.”

I pressed

I pressed her hand, but could not answer.

Leonetta gave me some drops, which revived me a little, when Alvaro, taking me by the hand, said—"I knew my friend and brother was the same I first found him, though he wanted to persuade me to the contrary."

"You are mistaken," I said, "for I am a villain!"

"It is false!" he replied; "and was it any man that said so but yourself, I would scalp him instantly!"

Leonetta soothed—Alvaro cheered me; but what appeared inexplicable was, Kora shed not one tear.—"Come," said Alvaro, "do not despond, exertion is requisite—you must quit us; and as your company is necessary to the happiness of the royal family of Spain, as soon as you make your appearance at court, your father will be released."

"I cannot go!" I exclaimed; "oh, it is equal horror whether I go or stay!"

“What, are you going mad again?” asked Alvaro.

“You must go,” said Kora—“if you value the peace of Kora, you must go!”

“Is it my *wife* says this?” I demanded.

“*Wife!*” said Leonetta.

“*Wife!*” exclaimed Alvaro—“Unhappy girl! and is it come to this?”

“Call me not unhappy,” said the heroic girl; “for the wife of Acasto is not unhappy if he is not miserable.”

“I cannot be completely so,” I said, “while I am possessed of Kora’s love.”

“And that you will never lose, till Kora parts with life,” she replied.—“Oh, mother, you know not half his worth, or you would have consented to the match, if we had asked you.”

“The only reason that would have induced me not to give my consent would have been, that you was not his equal, nor he at liberty to make you his own,” answered Leonetta.

“Unhappy couple!” said Alvaro, “I
will

will not reproach you, for I only am to blame—I was the means of bringing you together, and ought alone to be the sufferer!—But,” he added, turning to me, “you should not have taken the forbidden fruit; for could my sister have been the wife of Acasto with honour, he is the only man on earth to whom I would with pleasure have given her.”

“Am I not then a villain?” said I.

“No,” he replied; “the word villain can never be coupled with the name of Acasto.”

“Oh,” I exclaimed, “that it were possible for me to sink into annihilation! how gladly would I hide my head from the calamities I have heaped upon it—how thankfully would I consent to sink into nothing, and be as though I had never been, could I but extricate those I love from the miseries I have plunged them into!”

“Is it Acasto talks thus?” asked my wife; “shall Kora teach *him* fortitude?”

Arouse, shake off this despondency—go instantly to Madrid, and set your noble father free. It was for my sake he was imprisoned, and for my sake you must sacrifice all to set him at liberty. Fly! remember it is Kora bids you hence!”

“Alas!” I sighed, “you know not the consequence of my going to the court of Spain!”

“I know it all,” she replied; “I know your marriage with Isidora must take place.”

“Ah—what—marry her? impossible!” I exclaimed.

“Acasto,” said Kora, kneeling, “do not drive me to desperation; for if you persist in acting contrary to my earnest entreaties, the babe within my womb and I will die together! Start not, but hear me, for I am resolute: I give you my full consent to marry the lady Isidora; let her take your society, your person, and estates, so she leaves me but your heart; I shall be rich indeed—for she who possesses
the

the heart of Acasto can never be called poor. Should it happen that I outlive Isidora, I shall again consider myself your wife. On these terms, and these only, do I consent to live, and rear your yet unborn child." She arose, rushed out of the apartment, and I saw her no more."

"Adorable girl!" exclaimed Alvaro.

But I was dumb, for the unexampled conduct of my beloved Kora had stupified me.

Leonetta followed her daughter, and Alvaro remained with me, vainly endeavouring to instil that fortitude into me which Koraso eminently possessed. "Could I worship this angelic creature too much, who had sacrificed the dearest interests of her heart, to secure the peace and safety of me and my father? could I agree to leave for ever this dear object of my affections, and give my hand to a woman I did not esteem?—No, no, it cannot be," said I.

"By yon sun but it must," replied Al-

varo, "if I drive you hence by force! shall your noble father perish in a dungeon?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," I exclaimed, "say not so!"

"Will you remain here," continued he, "and be my sister's murderer, by driving her to commit suicide?"

"Hold!" said I; "no more! I do—I will consent to go."

"That is my loved friend," he replied; "go, act as Kora directs, and you will save the lives of her, your child, and your beloved father; stay, and you will occasion the death of all three!"

"Dreadful alternative!" I sighed.

Alvaro gave orders for my immediate departure.—"Oh God," I exclaimed, rising, "give me strength to support the parting from my beloved Kora!"

With unsteady steps I bent my way to her chamber; but she refused to see me, saying, it might be fatal to us both; that she knew the human heart too well to hazard the agony of taking leave; and,

as her last request, begged I would not insist on bidding her adieu.

I stood motionless at her lattice, when Alvaro took my arm, and silently dragged me away. Carlo supported me on the other side, and assisted in placing me on Achmet. Alvaro and himself mounting, we proceeded through the forest to the shore, where they placed me in a boat, rowed me to the ship, and got me on board. All this time I had not spoken, but gave way to the dumb anguish of my soul, for my grief was too great for utterance. Alvaro said—"Now, my brave fellow, let me see that you have fortitude to surmount your difficulties; remember, every moment will bring you nearer to the best of fathers, whose freedom you alone can secure. Strive to live, and perhaps some years hence, Kora may again be yours; and remember, you have a friend in Alvaro, who will not desert you till the last gasp of existence!"

He instantly leaped into the boat, and
stood

stood waving his hand till distance shut him from my view. It was then I felt the weight of all my woes: separated from every being I held dear, torn from the wife of my heart, who was the most amiable of her sex, doomed to give my hand to a woman who was the cause of all my miseries, or let the most affectionate father in the universe perish in a dungeon of the Inquisition.

I remained in a state of apathy till the vessel brought me within sight of the rock which defended one side of our castle; but how different were my sensations now, to what they were the last time I landed on the same spot, when I went to fetch Lopez to unite me to Kora! then all was hope and joy—now all was despair and sorrow.

The sight of our castle seemed to awaken me from the stupor grief had plunged me into, and I incessantly called on my father; but there was no father within to welcome me with open arms. I could not
bear

bear to enter, and determined to set off instantly for Madrid. Carlo said—"Master, I must accompany you; for I have promised the chief not to leave you, night or day, till you are in some measure out of your troubles."

"Peace, man," I vociferated, "and restore my father!"

I threw myself into the carriage, and Carlo followed me, when we travelled night and day till we arrived at the Spanish court, stopping on the road only to change mules. How I was enabled to perform the journey I knew not, for Carlo has since told me he was obliged to hold me in by main force, as I had a strong desire to throw myself under the wheels.

We entered the palace, passed the guards without speaking, as they all knew me, and rushed into the presence-chamber, where were the king, the queen, and Isidora; then throwing myself at the feet of her majesty, I wildly exclaimed—"My father! give me back my father!"

Isidora

Isidora shrieked, the king started, and the queen demanded—"What means this bold intrusion?"

"It means," I answered, "that you have torn from me my injured father; restore him to me again, and I will sacrifice my every hope of happiness to your caprice!"

"Insolence!" she exclaimed—"is this the way to ask a favour?—Guards, convey the proud Acasto to the Inquisition, and let him learn humility!"

"Hold!" said I, catching her by the robe; "cruel, unfeeling woman, stay, and hear my determination: restore my father, and I will be your slave; withhold him, and I will deluge your country in blood: ay, proud woman, I will let in the Africans, like swarms of locusts, upon your land, and they shall level the throne of Isabella with the dust!"

"Wretch!" she replied.

"Fiend!" I retorted; but could say no more, for I fell into strong convulsions.

I had

I had stifled my feelings ever since I quitted the mansion of Alvaro, but the sight of the author of my misfortunes made them break forth with tenfold violence. The poor king was concerned at my situation, and ordered Carlo in, who informed his majesty I had been mad ever since I heard of the imprisonment of the duke. He afterwards related to me the following scene:—

“ I thought that was the case, my Isabella,” said the king; “ the poor young man deserves compassion, and not reproof: consider what his feelings are at this time!”

“ Consider what *my* feelings must be,” interrupted her majesty, “ to be abused, stormed at, threatened, by a relation of yours! Shall I bear this? No! not without making him feel the effects of his rashness, and will take care he is entangled in his own net; for no one ever insulted Isabella with impunity!”

“ Recollect, my love,” replied the king, “ he is not answerable for his own actions
now,

now, being in a disordered state of mind."

"Is it possible you connive at those who ill treat the partner of your throne? do I see this, and live? Oh, it is too much!" said her majesty, stamping, and immediately went into strong hysterics.

The good king was distracted, vainly endeavouring to sooth her; Isidora said, her dear aunt would never recover; the attendants were terrified, the physicians summoned, the whole palace thrown into an uproar; and in this confusion Carlo carried me to the apartments kept for my use. The faithful fellow was miserable about me, but could get no help, as the attention of every one was turned to the queen; for he called, begged, prayed, entreated, stormed, yet all to no purpose; I was left at liberty to live or die without interference; and he went to seek assistance, when meeting one of the queen's physicians, he seized him by the arm, dragged him into the room, saying—"There lies the duke of Andalusia's son!"

"Is

"Is this young man son to the duke?" asked the physician.

"He is, and at the point of death," answered Carlo.

"The duke was my intimate friend," observed the doctor.

"Then save his son," said my servant.

"I will, if possible; if my skill is equal to the task, he shall not die; but in my opinion his case is desperate," replied the physician, as he proceeded to administer relief.

It was a long time before he had any hope of saving me, being obliged to leave me in the care of Carlo, with directions how to act, and returned to the ante-chamber of the queen, not daring to remain with me, lest his absence from his royal patient should give offence. He came frequently to see how I went on, and owing to his great skill, the convulsions began to abate, but left me in so weak a state, that I could scarcely be said to be alive. Carlo was my only nurse,
who

who was the most affectionate fellow that ever watched by the side of an unfortunate master. I was in a palace filled with domestics, but where, save in the breast of our good king, Compassion never dwelt, or if she dared to enter, arrogance would fright her thence, and she would seek refuge in some lowly cot, to sooth the sufferings of the humble swain, whose enviable situation in life I would gladly have exchanged, for all the riches, honours, titles, I possessed. Though I was the son of a duke, and nearly allied to the king, yet, because I was under the frown of royalty, no one thought it worth their while to inquire after me—I was too insignificant a being for these miscreants to ask if I lived. The physician slackened not his attentions to me, who was not an inhabitant of the palace, and Carlo was fidelity itself; but they could give no ease to my mind, for I incessantly raved on my father, my Kora, and my friend.

Some days after, the doctor told me, if
I would

I would try to be calm, and not give way to the poignancy of my feelings, I should see my father.

“Is it possible you can effect what you say? is your influence over the queen sufficient to obtain so great a blessing?” I demanded.

“I can perform my promise,” he said, “but have no influence over her majesty; and if I had, I dare not use it; for the king has forbidden any one to mention either you or your father in her presence, on pain of his displeasure.”

“Is the king so incensed against me?” I asked.

“I do not know that he is,” replied the doctor; “but you know his extreme fondness for his wife, and he is fearful of your name being whispered in her hearing, lest it should cause a relapse.”

“Is the queen really ill?” said I.

“She certainly is,” he answered, “and her illness was solely occasioned by you having the temerity to tell her a little plain

plain truth, a thing which seldom assails the ear of royalty."

"I hope she will never honour me with an interview again," I observed, "for my father's wrongs rise up in my mind, and rob me of patience. But this is wandering from the subject nearest my heart, which is, how you can procure me a sight of my father?"

"It would be dangerous to trust a young man with my plans who has so lately given such a special proof of forbearance as you have done," said the physician, smiling; "but rely on me, endeavour to recover, and I give you my word of honour, that as soon as your strength will permit, I will procure a meeting between you and the duke, provided you ask no more questions on the subject."

"Is my parent well?" I demanded; "what does he say about his son?"

"Remember I have imposed silence on you," he answered, and withdrew.

Carlo rubbed his hands, saying—"Now, master,

master, we shall do; this will tend more towards your recovery than all the medicine in Madrid. God bless you, get well as fast as you can, and we shall then know how the duke is, which is a blessing I never expected again."

"If you feel so much for him," said I, "what must my situation be, who have caused all his sufferings?"

The very idea brought on another paroxysm of my disorder, which alarmed poor Carlo, who was endeavouring to recover me, when a page from the queen entered the room, with orders for me to appear before her.

Had a thunderbolt have struck Carlo, he could not have been more astonished, but had the sense to answer, that I was extremely ill, and as soon as I was able I would wait on her majesty.—"Come, my dear master," said he, "swallow all your ill usage at once—let us go and hear what good news there is for us."

"I will never face that woman again,
without

without telling her a little more of my mind," I exclaimed; "oh, I think another sight of her will kill me!"

While I was speaking the page returned, saying, her majesty expected me immediately.

Carlo whispered to me not to speak, and went back with the man, but shortly after came to me, saying—"You must go, master, or make matters worse; for I entreated permission to represent to the queen how very ill you are, when she stopped me short, exclaiming—'Dead or alive, bring him before me!'"

"Yes, I will go," said I, "to see this tyrant once more;" and leaning on the arm of my faithful attendant, he with difficulty conducted me to the antechamber, where I saw my friend the physician, who motioned with his hand for me not to notice him, and we were ordered into the apartment where the queen was. She was much surprised at my haggard looks, and said—"Who have you brought here?"

"My

“ My master, and please your majesty,” replied Carlo.

“ Can this be the young Acasto?” asked the king.

“ He is,” said my man; “ but so altered by illness, I scarcely know him myself.”

“ Poor youth!” ejaculated my sovereign; “ he has suffered greatly—who has attended him?”

“ *I* have,” answered Carlo.

“ You! are you a medical man?” asked the king.

“ No, and please your majesty; but I have been his nurse,” replied Carlo.

“ Nurse! and has he had no other attendant than you?” demanded my old friend.

“ No other has seen him since the day he arrived at the palace,” said Carlo.

“ Shame! shame!” exclaimed the king; “ what have my people been about? But I am to blame.—Isabella, my love, we must have him properly attended; for your illness engrossed my thoughts so

much, I fear he has been neglected too long."

"We will talk of that in due time," said the queen; "I will first put one question to him.—Pray, young man," addressing me, "where did you spend your time for the last three months before you arrived at the palace?"

I fixed my frenzied eye on her, and remained silent.

She repeated her question.

Carlo was terrified on my account, and bumping down on both knees, said—"May it please your majesty to suffer me to answer the question?"

"How long have you lived with him?" demanded the queen.

"Ever since he was born," answered Carlo.

"Well then, as you value your life, speak with truth," said her majesty; "where did your master pass his time for three months before he arrived here?"

"On the sea," replied Carlo.

"On

“On the sea!” echoed the queen.

“Yes, and please your gracious majesty,” said my man; “after the six months of his *punishment* were ended, he expected to be called to court; but finding that was not the case, he laid it so to heart, that he fell into a bad state of health, and the duke sent him a-coasting to recover him.”

“It is strange I was not informed of this before!” observed the queen.

“Not at all, my dear,” replied the king; “you would not allow either the duke or Acasto to vindicate themselves.”

“As usual,” said this haughty woman, “your majesty never can find any one in the wrong but me!—Are you certain this is true?” turning to Carlo.

“It is false!” I vociferated; “I spent that time with an angel!”

“He is mad!” screamed her majesty, lifting up both her hands.

“Yes, and please your highness, he has been mad ever since the duke was taken
away,”

away," replied Carlo, dashing off a tear from his honest face.

"Who ordered him to be torn from me," I fiercely demanded, "but you, queen of fiends?"

"Take him away! take him away!" she shrieked.

"No, infernal woman, they shall not take me away till I have told thee that I hate thee!" was my reply.

The king ordered one of the physicians to attend, who fortunately happened to be the same who had befriended me, and he pronounced me insane. It was in vain I insisted on the contrary; their majesties judged by my conduct, which certainly was that of a madman, and I was placed under the care of the good Fernandez, for that was the doctor's name. He had me conveyed to my apartment by force, which I resisted with all my might, and which helped to confirm the by-standers still more in their opinion.

The doctor advised her majesty not to have

have me brought before her again till I was recovered, as he could not answer the ill effects it might have on her health, who instantly thought herself much worse in consequence of this last interview.

Carlo blessed his favourite saint that I was not the victim of my own imprudence, and Fernandez lectured me very severely on my rashness, in giving way to the violence of my feelings—"For," said he, "you endangered the lives of your good father, your attached servant, and yourself."

"I know not a greater curse," said I, "than intense feelings; not that I mean to vindicate my want of prudence, but I am not hypocrite enough to cringe and bow to a woman who has torn from me every blessing that Heaven had so largely given—I cannot tamely kiss the lash that has so keenly scourged me."

"I feel for you, my young friend," answered the physician, "and will do all that man can do to lessen your sufferings,

if you will once more promise to be calm."

"Rely on me," I replied, "that you shall not have cause to reprove me again for the same error."

"Oh, what a blessed thing it is," said Carlo, "that you raved, and called her majesty those ugly names! for she is positive you are mad, which will give us a little time to ourselves."

"Which time will be spent by my wretched father in a dungeon," I sighed.

"When you are convalescent," said the doctor, "we will talk further on this subject; but there is nothing to be done while you remain in your present weak state; and owing to your excess of feeling, you prolong the sufferings of your unfortunate father. I will give orders that no one shall see you but myself and your faithful servant."

I should have been thankful to have seen my father, had it cost me my life; but the kind Fernandez would not consent

sent till I was in some degree recovered, fearing a meeting might be fatal to me.

As soon as it was whispered in the palace that his majesty had given orders for me to be properly attended, every one was ready to pay their sycophantic homage to me, which I with scorn rejected; and Carlo resolutely obeyed the orders of my physician, not to admit any one into my apartment.

Matters remained thus for some time, when Fernandez delighted me one day by saying he would trust me to see my father.—“You seem to doubt my power,” he observed, “but I will explain myself. When your father was first taken from his castle, by order of the queen, and lodged in the Inquisition, the shock he received at such unmerited ill treatment impaired his health, and I being a favourite with her majesty, was commanded to attend him, which enabled me to soften the rigour of his fate, on account of my medical functions. He has been worse during the
K 4
nights

nights than in the daytime, therefore I have frequently visited him in the night, and stayed two or three hours with him at once, to engage his mind by conversation, and beguile the time. As you are nearly my height, I propose you shall change clothes with me, envelope yourself in my large cloak, and instead of me, pay him one of these nocturnal visits. If you are discovered, it will only be thought you are a madman, and there the affair will end; but it is not likely you will be found out, for I am ordered by the familiars not to speak to any one except my patient, not even to the turnkeys."

I grasped the hand of Fernandez, and should have thrown myself at his feet, had he not prevented me.—"When—oh, when shall this take place?" I asked.

"To-night," he answered.

I waited for the wished-for hour with a palpitating heart.

Before I proceed with my narrative, I will give you a description of the Inquisition

THE BRAZEN MASK. 201

tion at Madrid, or at least that part of it which I have seen. It is a fine, extensive building, and better would it be were it appropriated to a more laudable purpose. It is three stories high, and has several vaulted galleries, along which are situated a number of dungeons, of six, seven, eight, and nine feet square; those on the ground-floor and on the first story having no windows, are deprived of both light and air, which may be termed a great blessing to the miserable beings who are chained there, for it helps to shorten their existence and their sufferings together. The dungeons in the next story have a kind of breathing-hole, in the form of a chimney, strongly grated at the top, through which the sky may be seen. These upper apartments are allotted to prisoners who it is supposed have some chance of being set at liberty. In the wall of each dungeon there is a hole, of about an inch in diameter, which communicates with a private gallery, running along by

each row of dungeons. By these means the agents of the Inquisition can at any time see what is passing with the prisoners, without being observed by them. In these corridors, or galleries, are seats, so contrived, that a familiar can observe what is the conduct of two prisoners, by just turning his eyes from right to left, in order to look into either of the holes, between which he is seated. These spies wear list shoes, and the corridors are all matted, that they may not make the least noise in walking past the dungeons. A familiar of the Inquisition is often shut up with a prisoner, from whom it is wished to draw confessions, to be afterwards used against him, when the familiar is furnished with a plausible tale, of his own pretended sufferings, to impose on the unfortunate prisoner, and gain his confidence. I think the infernal regions cannot be sufficiently terrible as a place of punishment for these miscreants.

- In the first dungeon my father was put
into,

into, there was a human skull and other bones, and on the wall was carved the name of some unfortunate prisoner, accompanied with five hundred notches, indicating probably so many days, which mark a confinement of near seventeen months, terminating very likely by the death of the prisoner. The name of this unfortunate person carved on the wall was, Leonardo de Guzman. This is an exact description of those parts of the Inquisition which I have seen.

Night at last came on, when Fernandez equipped me in his habiliments, enveloped me in his large cloak, the hood of which nearly hid my face, and directed me which way to steer my course, for the Inquisition joins the Escorial.

It was at the hour of twelve, when taking a lamp in my hand, I sallied forth, and descending a large stone staircase, passed along a winding corridor, which was terminated by a narrow flight of steps, leading into a number of vaults be-

neath the palace. All these I traversed, till coming to the last, I discovered a small iron door, strongly secured on the outside by three curious locks, which Fernandez gave me the keys of, and having unfastened them, I gave three gentle taps, as I had been instructed, and instantly heard the ponderous bolts on the other side give way, when the door opened, and presented to my view a wretch who appeared scarcely human, in the lineaments of whose face nothing could be traced but barbarous ferocity. This was one of the beings whose office it was to torture the prisoners.—“So, Don Fernandez,” said he, “you are earlier than usual.”

I answered by a slight movement of my head, and he led the way through many dismal windings, till we came to another iron door, which he unlocked, saying—“Go on; you have been here often enough to know the way.”

He shut the door after me, locked it on

his own side, leaving me at liberty to proceed up a long flight of steps, so damp that I could scarcely keep on my feet. When I arrived at the top, there was another winding corridor, similar to that beneath, with rows of dungeons on each side, and on this floor my father was lodged. These apartments were all numbered, and his was forty-two. I stopped some moments opposite his door, to collect all the fortitude I could, when one of the familiars perceived me, and taking a large bunch of keys from his side, unlocked the door, saying—"I cannot think, doctor, why your patient is to be better attended than the other prisoners; in my opinion, the rack would be of more service than any thing you can prescribe."

I involuntarily shuddered, and it was with difficulty I restrained myself from giving him his death-blow. He perceived my agitation, and holding his lamp up to my face, exclaimed—"What means this, doctor? I thought people in your line were

were not troubled with finer feelings than gentlemen of my profession!"

I gave myself up for lost; but forcing a smile into my face, bowed, and stepped into the apartment of my father.

What a sight for a son who loved a parent as I did him! and what a bitter reflection, that I was the cause of his being placed there! He was sitting, with his head leaning on his hand, his eyes bent on the ground, buried in deep thought, and appeared much emaciated. I am not ashamed to say, the big tears chased each other down my cheek at this moment, for my soul sickened at the sight.

I made a kind of rustling noise, which aroused him from his reverie; he raised his languid eye, fixed it on me, rose up, extended his hand, saying—"My only friend Fernandez, this kindness never can be repaid; once more welcome to my dungeon. What of my son?"

I trembled exceedingly, and he continued—

nued—"Do not be afraid to tell me—where is my boy?"

"At your feet," I replied, kneeling, and dropping off the cloak.

He bent over me in speechless agony, and at last fell back, covered with cold perspiration. I raised him, placed him in his chair, rubbed his temples, gave him some medicine which stood on the table, and leaned his aged head against my breast. He recovered a little, and clasping me to his heart, said—"Now I can close my eyes in peace, for I have once more seen my son!"

It is useless to attempt a description of our feelings, for none can have an idea of them but those who have been in similar situations: for above an hour we were scarcely rational. At length I desired my father to inform me of what had happened since we last met.

He said, as soon as my refusal to appear at court was reported to their majesties, the queen ordered him to be arrested, and

and he was taken, without a moment's notice, conveyed under a strong guard to Madrid, and lodged in the Inquisition. He was at first treated with great rigour, being placed in the lower dungeon I mentioned before, where the name of Leonardo de Guzman was carved on the wall. He was several times taken before the grand inquisitor, who sat as chief judge in the great hall, and interrogated him about his son. My father resolutely refused to answer any questions—"For," said he to me, "how could I exonerate myself without criminating my boy?" —

The inquisitors pointed to the various instruments of torture which lay scattered around; but parental affection smiled at them all, and rose superior to their menaces. Extreme illness shielded him at last from these kind of persecutions; for it being supposed he could not long survive, his enemies were fearful he would die before they could obtain the wished-for intelligence respecting me, and doctor Fernandez

Fernandez was ordered to attend him, who desired him to be removed out of that loathsome dungeon, and placed in the one he was now in. The good physician procured him many comforts, prescribed for him with the greatest skill, and poured into his wounded mind the healing balm of sympathy.

What went nearest his heart was, my not assigning any reason for my refusal, which left him totally in the dark respecting my conduct, and caused him much perplexity; for he dared not clear himself, lest he should involve me in still greater difficulties.—“Thus,” continued he, “have I suffered the storm to batter on this aged head, and blanch these locks, which are whitened more by suppressed feelings than by the hand of time, in the hope of shielding my beloved Acasto from the bitter persecution of his powerful enemies, being confident he had good reasons for his conduct.”

The duke paused, expecting a reply, which

which I endeavoured to avoid ; for I knew, if an eclaireissement took place, that his life would be the forfeiture; for his extreme honour was such, he would have suffered death in any shape rather than I should sacrifice the happiness of an indifferent person, much less a woman possessed of the sweetness and fortitude of my Kora.

I changed the subject, by delivering Alvaro's message, in which he desired to be sent for in case of an emergency, when he would raise the Inquisition to the ground, or spill his last drop of blood, but he would set my father free.

The duke was pleased with the invariable attachment of his adopted son, but said he had more valour than prudence; for the jealousy of Isabella would never suffer an African chief to set foot in Madrid.

I next adverted to my marriage with Isidora, which, though I recoiled at, was determined should take place as speedily as possible; for I plainly saw that was the
only

only way I could procure my father's liberty. He amazed me by saying—"I do not know, my son, whether that union ought to be solemnized or not, for it requires much consideration."

"What means my father?" I eagerly demanded.

"Listen, and I will tell you," he replied. "On the second night after I was brought to this horrible prison, some one entered my dungeon, which, by the reflection of the lamp he held in his hand, I perceived to be the Brazen Mask. I instantly sprang upon him, when he disengaged himself from my grasp, saying—'Hold, Andalusia! I do not mean to resort to hostilities against you, unless your future conduct drives me to do so; I am come to make a proposition to you, which if you will agree to, you and I may be good friends yet.'—'Think you,' I exclaimed, 'Acasto, duke of Andalusia, will make friends with a villain? No, wretch! sooner than coalesce with thee, he would suffer a thousand vipers to
tear

tear out his vitals. Away ! and thy proposal perish with thee !"—‘ Hear me,’ said the Mask, ‘ if you wish to preserve the life of young Acasto, your son——’—‘ Ah ! what of him ?’ I asked.—‘ I will,’ he answered, ‘ guarantee his life and your own, with the possession of all your estates, and fifty thousand doubloons out of my own purse, provided he does not marry the lady Isidora, or any other woman.’—‘ Who is it,’ said I, ‘ that dares to insult the duke of Andalusia with the offer of a bribe ?’—‘ Time will shew,’ he replied.—‘ Who is it,’ I demanded, ‘ that ventures to make me a base offer, and dares not shew his face ?’—‘ It is one who can destroy thee, root and branch,’ he answered ; ‘ reject my proposal, and you die ! ay, and your son dies with you !’—‘ My son ?’ I exclaimed.—‘ Ay,’ continued he, ‘ that son on whom you doat shall you behold stretched on the rack, and in the last agonies of death he shall be convinced his father might have saved him, and would not !’—‘ Monster,’

ster,' I cried out, 'no more, lest madness sets my brain on fire, and I tear thee piecemeal!'—'Rave on,' he calmly said; 'but you will find you must come to my terms at last.'—'Never!' I replied, kneeling—'never, so help me Heaven!'—'We shall revoke that oath ere long,' he observed; 'at present I leave you to reflect on my offer, and shall return in a few days to know your determination, whether you choose life or death.'

—“He quitted me, locked my dungeon door, leaving me almost in a state of distraction. I in vain attempted to discover this mysterious villain; for the more I racked my imagination, the further off I seemed to be from finding him out; and the only chance there was left was, to observe the tone of his voice; but even in this I was disappointed, as he spoke in a falsetto voice, and not in his natural tone.

“On the next day I was taken before the grand inquisitor, when the first question he asked me struck upon my ear as
spoken

spoken in the same falsetto as that in which the Brazen Mask spoke. I did not reply, in order to make him speak again, when he repeated his question, and his voice completely confirmed me in my opinion, that the grand inquisitor and the Brazen Mask are one and the same person; but who he would prove to be when divested of his inquisitorial habiliments, and the disguise he wore whenever I had seen him in the brazen mask, I was still at a loss to determine. Though he was at this time without a mask, I could not get sight of his face, for he wore a large cowl, which hid him from my penetration; and there was a shade placed between him and the lamp, that prevented the light from falling on any part of his features which the cowl might not have concealed.

“ Finding I was not to be awed by his menaces, and that I persisted in my resolution of not answering any questions, he ordered me back to my dungeon, where I
passed

passed the night with my old companion, the skull.—‘And this,’ said I, taking it up in my hand—‘this is the end of all human grandeur! Poor skull,’ addressing it as though it understood me, ‘whatever thy sufferings were, at least thou art at peace now, and I would my persecutions were as completely finished as thine! En-
viable state, to be thus insensible to all the miseries around! And these sockets, where perhaps the frenzied eyes have rolled, lighted by ambition or revenge, what are they now but cavities for worms to gambol in? what are pleasures, riches, honours, titles, to thee now?’

“I was moralizing thus, when four familiars entered my dungeon, with ponderous chains, with which they loaded me, and fastened me to the wall. The reason of this I knew not, for neither side spoke a word; but I still retained hold of the skull, and these wretches, having finished their work, left me. Notwithstanding this last mark of malice, my spirits were

not

not so depressed as usual; for being confident that my unknown enemy and the inquisitor were the same, I hoped that time would develop the mystery.

“Many hours elapsed, and the night being far advanced, I began to think it would pass without interruption, when the door opened, and my unfriendly visitor stood before me. Forgetting my chains, I attempted to spring upon him; but finding it ineffectual, I dashed the skull at him, which hit the mask, and bounded back again.—‘’Tis well,’ said he, ‘I took the precaution to have you chained, or you might have pounced upon me like an old tiger, as you did aforetime.’—‘Villain,’ I exclaimed, ‘behold that!’ pointing to the skull; ‘to such a state must thou come at last, and where—where will thine immortal soul be? when the iron grasp of death seizes thee, which not all thy dark contrivances can aid thee to escape, what wouldst thou give to exchange conditions with the poor persecuted

cuted being thy villany is crushing to the grave! But there thy power ceases, for none of thy fetters can confine my free-born soul, which, when disencumbered of this tenement of clay, will, soaring, wing its flight to Him who gave it.'—'Hold!' he said, 'no more of this: I came to know what your determination is respecting my proposal.'—'It is, to defy thee,' I answered.—'Take care how you do that,' he observed; 'for no one ever did that, and lived.'—'Think you I fear to die?' I asked. 'No—it is such a guilty wretch as thee who fears the approach of death; I should hail him as the harbinger of joy.'—'Curse on thy stoicism!' he ejaculated; 'is there no kind of torture can make thee tremble?'—'None!' I replied. 'Look at these massy chains—have they made me more pliant to thy will? take a survey of this unwholesome dungeon—has it induced me to accept thy base proposal? have the threats of the grand inquisitor shaken my resolution? No! I never yet

was awed before my fellow worm!"—"By Heaven," he exclaimed, "I must hear no more! for if my determination was not firmly fixed, you would gain your point. I will pursue a different line of conduct, and use persuasives to induce you to comply; I will not insist upon it as a right, but ask it as a favour. Shall I entreat you not to reject my offer, for the sake of your inestimable son?"—"You have touched a cord that vibrates to my heart," I replied, "but it cannot lead me to be guilty of dishonour: my word is passed to the king and queen that my son shall marry the lady Isidora, and I will never revoke it."—"I would overturn kingdoms to prevent that marriage taking place," he said; "therefore, as milder means have failed, force must prevail. I will not leave you till you have sworn that your son Acasto never shall marry Isidora, or any one else."—"Then you will stay with me a long time," I observed; "but pray what is your reason for prohibiting him from marrying
at

at all?'—'My motive I shall not make you acquainted with,' he answered: 'will you take the oath?'—'Never!' I replied. —'Will you swear?' said he, putting a missal into my hand, and holding the point of his sword to my breast.—'No,' I answered; 'plunge your weapon to my heart, for I never will comply!'—'May miseries greater than can be found in the Inquisition fall upon you!' said he, stamping. 'I shall speak to you on this subject no more; but mark me, if Acasto marries Isidora, he dies!'

"The Mask ceased speaking, and instantly rushed out of my dungeon. I have not been troubled with a visit from him since, but have been taken several times before the grand inquisitor, and interrogated about my son; yet, persisting in my resolution of not answering any questions on the subject, I was remanded back again till my final examination, which, owing to my extreme illness, has not yet taken place. I have been treated

with more lenity since my indisposition; my kind friend Fernandez has procured many comforts for me, and through his means I have once more been blessed with the sight of my beloved son."

My father paused, and silently raising his eyes to heaven, gave thanks for our unexpected meeting.

The rays of morn shot down the air-hole, or chimney of his dungeon (for there were no windows in it), which warned me to depart. Think what my feelings were at leaving such a parent, in such a situation! I promised to see him the next night, if Fernandez thought it prudent, took leave of him again and again, but still returned, till his fears for my safety surmounted every other consideration, and he entreated me to be gone.

I made the signal which our friend the physician had directed me, and the door was opened by one whom I had not seen before, and being more loquacious than the rest, said—"Our prisoner is worse, I suppose,

suppose, doctor, as you have staid so long with him? I cannot think why one body is to be better attended to than another, when they come to such a place as this; for if they deserve to come at all, they ought not to have any pity after. You look surprised; but, Lord bless you! they die by dozens, and nobody takes any notice, except, when we enter their cells, and find them dead, we carry the bodies to the burying-ground that belongs to the Inquisition, which, in my opinion, must make them amends for coming here, because, you know, it is consecrated ground, and they get as good Christian burial as any Catholics in Spain: we have three to put into the ground to-day."

I stopped suddenly, and sighed.

"You seem to doubt the truth," said he; "but come along with me, and you shall see them, for they all died while you was shut up with the duke."

I quickened my pace, in order to shake off such an odious companion, when he

burst into a laugh, saying—"Do not run, doctor, the dead men cannot catch you. I thought men of your trade were pretty well acquainted with the dead."

By this time I was arrived at the door which the second familiar opened, and I gladly escaped from the horrid wretch who, by his barbarity, had struck me with detestation of my own species. When the door was closed, I leaned against the wall for support, my agitation being so great, I could not proceed a step further. The keeper of the iron door took hold of my arm, and seated me on a bench, saying—"You seem very ill, doctor, and I suppose it is with sitting up with yonder prisoner. But never mind, the Holy Virgin will reward you, if it was to cost you your life."

"Is it possible?" I asked, looking wildly at the man.

"What do you mean?" said he.

"Is it possible, that the least sense of true religion, the least spark of humanity,
can

can be found in the breast of a familiar of the Inquisition?" I demanded.

"Wô be to me," he replied, "if I did not possess both!"

"Then why are you here?" I asked.

"Because I cannot get away," he answered. "I was brought here by mistake, and imprisoned for a crime I never committed. A neighbour of mine had given offence to some of the agents of the Inquisition, on the score of religion, when he was ordered to be arrested; and as I resembled him in height, they by mistake seized me, and conveyed me hither, tearing me away from the best wife in Madrid. I was left to pine four days in one of the lower dungeons, then taken into the great hall to be examined, when the mistake was found out; but they would not let me have my liberty, promise what I would, binding me by the most dreadful oath, that I would not leave the Inquisition, even if an opportunity should offer, lest I should tell tales, and appointed me

keeper of this door, which I look upon as an act of mercy, for I am far removed from the scenes of horror which daily occur, and would be death to me to witness."

"Yours is indeed a pitiable case," I said; "but what became of your wife?"

"Alas!" he replied, "that is what weighs me down; for I have never been able to let her hear from me since I have been here."

"Your name?" said I.

"Manillo," he answered.

"Enough," I observed; "she shall know you are alive; for as I am not able to go, I will send to her by a friend in the course of a few days."

The poor man was almost frantic with joy at this unexpected offer, and knew not how to thank me enough. I began to recover from the agitation the other unfeeling monster had thrown me into, and described him to Manillo, who said—
"That is Bernardo, a being not worthy the name of man, though a fit instrument
for

for those who employ him. But yet I am inclined to pity the mistaken wretch, for all his conduct is governed by the grossest bigotry, which he mistakes for true religion."

I took my leave of Manillo, having made him repeat the direction to his wife, and retraced my way to the iron door, which led into the vaults beneath the palace, which was guarded by a ferocious being, who resembled Bernardo. I passed him in silence, and entered the vaults, where I could not help stopping to invoke the protection of Heaven for my suffering father, at the same time giving thanks that he was alive, and so singularly preserved, notwithstanding he was placed in such hands.

I regained the avenue which led into the palace, and arrived safe at the door of my apartment, where I heard the voice of Carlo lamenting my absence.—“ I tell you,” he said, “ he never will return alive. Oh that I had persuaded him not to go,

for I fear by this time, every limb of his has been stretched on the rack!—Oh, my master, whom I loved as if he were my own child!”

I could not bear to hear more, and entered hastily, to put an end to the poor fellow's uneasiness. He was as extravagant through joy as he had been from grief, turning me round and round, to assure himself I was unhurt.

Fernandez took my hand, saying—“My young friend, I am not going to chide you for causing me so much uneasiness, as it was natural for you to stay till the last moment with your father, considering what you have suffered from separation. You left the duke——”

“Better than I found him,” was my answer. “Oh, Fernandez, that I could learn a language which could convey my thanks!”

“That would be unnecessary,” said the doctor, “for the pleasure is not all your own—do not think but I come in for my share;

share; for those who are acquainted with the inestimable duke of Andalusia and his son will always find their own felicity augmented by contributing to theirs."

I silently admired this disinterested man; but the faithful Carlo shook him heartily by the hand, saying—"I shall esteem you, doctor Fernandez, as long as I live, for your goodness to both my masters."

—The next night, our friendly physician told me, I must not think of going there, as he wished to ascertain the state of my father's health—"For," said he, "joy sometimes does as much mischief as sorrow, especially where there are strong feelings; but to-morrow night you shall take your turn."

I felt the force of his observation, and still more grateful for his unparalleled kindness. He told me, on the following morning, that he found his patient better than his most sanguine hopes could lead him to expect—"But," added he, "no

wonder, since you have administered to him that peace of mind it was out of my power to procure without you."

Fernandez and I visited my father alternately, and his recovery was incredibly rapid; but I was not so thankful for his convalescence as I ought to have been, having a considerable drawback on my felicity, owing to the dread of his being taken before the head inquisitor, for his final examination. I entreated Fernandez to inform the king and queen of my perfect sanity, that I might have an opportunity of hastening my marriage with Isidora. He was fearful of new persecutions taking place against me, as soon as it was understood I was able to endure them; and Carlo was loud in his remonstrances, lest I should endanger the happiness we had but just tasted.—“At least, my dear master, remain quiet while your enemies will suffer you to be so,” said the feeling creature; “and do not expose us to fresh alarms, and

alarms, by sending word to her cruel majesty that you are well."

I smiled at his method of pleading, but remained firm in my resolution; for though the recollection of my beloved Kora struck to my heart, yet I saw no way of liberating my father, without making such a sacrifice, and I knew she would not consent to live, if he was to remain in captivity. Whichever way I viewed these unfortunate circumstances, there was nothing for me to do but to marry the woman whom I loathed, and abandon the one I fondly loved.

I was deeply reflecting on my wretched situation, when Carlo, who had left the room, returned, and interrupted my reverie, saying—"Master, master, remember you are mad! oh, for the sake of St. Anthony, do not let them know but you are mad, for they are coming to see you!"

He had scarcely done speaking when Sebastian entered, conducted by one of the queen's pages, and with open arms approached

approached me.—“My dear Acasto,” said he, “sorry am I to see you thus! why—oh, why did not you send for me?”

“Because, and please your honour’s greatness, he was mad,” said Carlo, bowing low.

“I have heard it all,” replied Sebastian.

“My friend and kinsman, glad am I to see you,” I said; “true it is I have been ill—very ill, but am now recovering.”

“Do not believe him,” interrupted my servant, “he is mad now—as mad as any lunatic in an hospital. Oh, if you had but heard what ugly names he called her gracious majesty, you would have been sure he had lost his wits!”

“The fears of my attached servant,” I said, “make him suppose I am not so nearly recovered as is really the case. Believe me, Sebastian, I am thankful you are come, for my poor father’s sake.”

“The duke is——” said he.

“A prisoner in the Inquisition!” I replied.

“Infamous!”

“Infamous!” he exclaimed, “to think my noble relative, who is integrity itself, is to be immured there! I do not wonder you lost your senses, for I can scarcely keep mine. However, let me entreat you to be as collected as possible, and excuse the shortness of this visit, for business presses; but I will return to you the first moment I can, when we will talk over your affairs, and see what can be done.”

He abruptly left me, amazed, and mortified at his short stay, for I wanted his advice in many things, when Carlo broke silence, saying—“There now, you would not be mad, all I could say; and now there will be more mischief hatched, and then I shall be crazed myself.—Oh, St. Anthony, preserve my poor master, for he is mad when he ought to be in his senses, and in his senses when he ought to be mad!”

I could not help smiling at his strange remark, and taking his hand, said—“My faithful fellow, depend on it we shall get through

through this affair without artifice; but should it prove otherwise, I have too great a value for thine honest heart to give thee cause to say thy master has acted dishonourably."

"There you will ruin us," he exclaimed, "by having too much of that confounded thing called honour. I would give all the money I have saved, and every thing I am worth in the world, that you had not one grain of it; for a man who has too much had better have none at all."

I endeavoured to argue the point, but found it impossible to bring him over to my opinion, he was so fearful I had injured myself for want of what he called policy.

Two hours elapsed, and my uneasiness increased, when Sebastian returned, leading in—my father! The rapture this unexpected blessing threw me into can hardly be described; I embraced my father, then Sebastian, but could not articulate a syllable.—

syllable.—“ My son !” said the duke, “ I once more clasp my son !”

Carlo threw himself at the feet of my father, and then gave Sebastian one of his friendly hugs, which almost deprived him of breath. Sebastian was the only one of the quartetto who seemed to possess common sense, and addressing me, said—“ You, doubtless, are surprised at the sudden change in your favour, but I will inform you by what means I have procured your father’s emancipation. On seeing your altered looks, I abruptly left you, determined to befriend you, or share your misfortunes, and repaired to the chamber of your mistress, into whose ear I poured volumes of adulation, swearing there was but one proof of her friendship which I would accept. She asked me what it was.—‘ The liberation of my kinsman, the duke of Andalusia !’ I answered.—‘ You have asked for a strange mark of my favour,’ she said ; ‘ but it shall be done—follow me.’ She led the way, and I followed

—oldallya

lowed her to the queen's apartment, which she entered, saying—'I have brought a poor beggar, who has a boon to crave of my good aunt; and I am come to attend as his special pleader.' The queen laughed, and said—'What wild scheme are you planning now, Isidora?—Pray, Mr. Beggar, what is your request?'—'The freedom of Andalusia,' I replied, dropping on one knee.—'Upon my word, but it is no trifle that you ask,' said her majesty—'Do you second him in his motion, niece?'—'I do indeed, with all my heart,' answered the lady.—'Then he is free,' observed the queen; 'or at least, free from the power of the Inquisition. But remember, Sebastian, we commit him to your care, and at your hands shall require him whenever he is called for.' I arose, making my obeisance to the ladies, and taking with me the mandate of the queen, steered my course to the dungeon of the duke, whom I instantly released, and escorted hither. You are now made acquainted

quainted with all the spells and witchcraft I have used ; and believe me, Acasto, my satisfaction is little short of your own. As I do not mean to turn gaoler myself, I shall place your father in your care, being confident he will not go beyond the bounds of the palace without further orders. I must now hasten to return my thanks to the ladies, and will see you again the first opportunity."

Sebastian gaily took his leave, loaded with the blessings of us both. I felt his extreme delicacy, in committing my father to my care: there was something in the action which a grateful heart would know how to appreciate.—"And this is the man," said I, "which I have looked upon with an eye of suspicion, who I accused of meanness, hypocrisy, and selfishness! Oh, how I have wronged him! Could I, if we had exchanged situations, have acted more nobly, with more disinterestedness?"

"No," answered the duke, "you could not,

not, my son; and let this be a warning to you, not always to judge by appearances."

We seemed, comparatively speaking, to pass our time in heaven, and our friend Fernandez shared our felicity. He told her majesty of my recovery, who said she would turn her attention to me as soon as other business would permit. He said he had not been negligent respecting poor Manillo, and had found out his heart-broken wife, who could not believe, for a long time, that her husband was alive. The doctor staid with her till she was more composed, and able to write to Manillo, to whom he delivered the letter.

"We must try what Sebastian can do for him," I said; "for, without interest, there is no favour can be obtained in a court."

Sebastian frequently visited us, and we looked upon him as our guardian angel. I one day urged him to hasten my union with Isidora, that my father might be

free

free from the danger of being again imprisoned.

“What,” he demanded, “are you so much in haste?”

“I am indeed,” was my answer.

“You love her then?” he asked.

“I loath her,” I replied; “but my father pines while the least suspicion breathes upon his character.”

“I was in hopes,” said Sebastian, “of freeing you from that match; but the lady gives way to such capricious humours, that I cannot positively say whether I stand any chance or not; but I will propose you shall visit her, and then we may be able to find out her intention. Sometimes I think she is very fond of me, and at others she seems to hate my presence. You understand her better than I do, though I believe she intends to marry one of us, but which, it is impossible to determine.”

We were amusing ourselves with this incomprehensible woman, when a page came

came to the door, with a message from donna Isidora, inquiring after the health of the duke and his son.

I returned a suitable answer, saying, we should be happy to pay our respects to the lady, if she would grant us permission.

“So,” said Sebastian, “what is in the wind now? some new whim, beyond all doubt. I suppose I have offended this high-bred nymph, and she intends to mortify me with behaving a little civilly to you.”

The page returned, with his mistress’s wish that my father and I would wait on her on the following morning.

When the boy was gone—“You may wait on her, and welcome, *to-morrow*,” said Sebastian; “but I have not a drop of Spanish blood in me if I do not see her to-night.”

I advised him to go by all means, to gain admission if he could, and laughing, said—“I do not know whether the lady hates

hates you or no, but I am certain you love her."

"Pshaw! no such thing," he replied; "though I am determined to marry her, and will go and tell her so directly."

He left me, diverted at his chagrin; and after being absent some hours, he returned, mortified, and with downcast looks.—"She will not see me," he sighed; "the jade has refused me admittance. If there is a devil in a female form, its name is Isidora! Should she marry you, Acasto, after the hopes she has given me, she is, of all women, the greatest jilt that ever lived. But, no, I cannot think that is her intention either. To-morrow perhaps will throw a little light on the business, and till then, adieu!"

The duke and I waited on the lady, agreeable to appointment, who behaved with more affability than was her usual custom, and his grace shortly after withdrew, leaving me to court her in the best manner I could. The form of my adored Kora
started

started to my imagination, increasing my embarrassment; but there was no avoiding the sacrifice, and I came to the point at once, by desiring the arbitress of my fate to name an early day for the celebration of our nuptials.

"This is somewhat sudden," she observed; "I thought you wished to put off that evil day as long as possible."

"By no means," I replied; "believe me, my future happiness depends on my marriage with the lady Isidora."

"Believe him not!" exclaimed Sebastian, rushing into the room.

"Sebastian!" I said.

"Acasto," he answered, "you know you never loved this lady!"

"Pray, sir," she asked, "who sent you here to tell me so?"

"Friendship," he replied; "I could not bear to see you throw yourself away upon one who detests you."

"For whom do you shew most friendship?"

ship in this affair, yourself or me?" she demanded.

He looked confused, but remained silent, and Isidora, turning to me, said—"It is true, Acasto, I have had many proofs of your indifference, which perhaps no woman but myself would have overlooked, and probably you will be the first to blame my weakness; but now I entreat you for once to use a little candour, and tell me frankly whether I possess your heart or no?"

I knew not what reply to make, for hope whispered that the moment was come to shake off the dreaded yoke, and fear for my father's safety deprived me of courage to speak the truth.—"If this union," I answered, "does not take place, lady, the refusal must come from you."

"That is as much as to say," she observed, "you should be glad if I would reject you—is it not?"

"If our marriage is in any way disagreeable to you, I certainly should," I re-

plied; and the words had no sooner passed my lips than I saw my error, for her eyes flashed fire.

“I believe you,” she said, with a malicious smile; “and, to shew you how strong my regard is, I will marry you to plague you!”

“Isidora,” said Sebastian, “you never will do that! is this to be the end of all my hopes?”

“Indeed it is,” she answered; “for if the mind of man is so weak as to let his hopes aspire to matrimony because a woman condescends to smile upon him, e’en let him suffer for his presumption!—Acasto, I expect you to meet me at the altar on the third morning after this: Sebastian may be there if he chooses. Till then, farewell to you both.”

She scornfully left us, staring at each other with amazement. Sebastian first recovered his speech, and cursed his madness in rushing into the room.—“But,” said he, “I knew your aversion to the match,

match, and determined if possible to prevent it. I knew, for your father's sake, you dared not but marry her, and thought to induce her to refuse you; but instead of that, I have driven her on to complete your misery. Blind fool that I was, I might have foreseen Isidora would act diametrically opposite to any other woman. You will have occasion to execrate my officiousness to the last hour of your life."

"My doom is fixed," I said; "but I beg you will conceal from my father what has just occurred between Isidora and me. I do not blame you, Sebastian, for your intention was good, though the affair has turned out differently to what we expected."

He pressed my hand, leaving me without speaking.

I bent my way to my chamber, and drew comparisons between the angelic creature who was pining for me at a distance, and the vindictive woman who was

determined to marry me, in spite of the marked indifference I had always shewn her. My father entered, and smiled with heartfelt pleasure, when I told him in three days I was to unite myself with donna Isidora.

"I give thee joy, my boy!" he said, "for then our troubles will cease—then you will be envied by all the nobility in Spain, for monarchs would give their ears for such a woman. We are sent for to the presence-chamber, and, no doubt, shall see your mistress there. Hasten, boy, hasten!"

The duke was so delighted himself, he did not perceive the chagrin which preyed on me, and I followed him to the audience room, where were their majesties. The king took my father's hand, saying—"Andalusia, let all animosities be buried here."

"Be it so," my father answered; "though I must confess myself a little obstinate; but it was a parent's feelings made me so."

"Enough,

"Enough, enough!" interrupted the king; then turning to me, asked what new compliment I intended to pay her majesty?

I took the hint, perceiving he alluded to the pretty names I called her the last time I was in her presence, and kneeling, said—"I will trust to the goodness of her majesty's heart, to pardon whatever errors I was guilty of during a violent paroxysm of my disorder, for I was not then master of myself."

"It is granted," said the queen, extending her hand.

"Well done, young man! you know how to manage the ladies, I see," said the king; "but what arguments did you make use of to gain the hand of our niece so unexpectedly? for we are to have a wedding all in a hurry I hear."

"I took the lady when she was in the humour," I replied.

"The best time of all," said the king, laughing; "I give you joy for being the

most fortunate youth at court. Well, well, this long-projected union draws to a close, which I have for many years set my heart upon."

"May I request your majesty's intercession in my behalf," I said, addressing the queen, "with the lady Isidóra, to grant me an interview each day till the happy one of our nuptials arrives?"

"By no means," replied her majesty; "I should be sorry if my niece was to be guilty of so great a weakness; for when a young lady has given her consent to become the wife of her suitor, there is an impropriety in any further visits between the parties, which I am confident Isidóra will never stoop to."

"Ay, ay, that is perfectly right, I believe," said the king, "for that was the way you served me, Isabella: you ladies think so much of your maiden modesty, that there is no surmounting your resolution."

"Then

"Then I have nothing to do but to bow submission," I observed.

"That is the only thing you will have to do all the rest of your life," said his majesty, smiling.

We had some further conversation, and took our leave; but I cannot say whether my father or the king was the most pleased, and at the same time observed, that the queen was not so much elated as they were.

The whole palace was in an uproar in making preparations, and the attendants frequently ran against each other, the hurry and confusion was so great, for our wedding was to take place much sooner than was expected. Sebastian and I spent the intervening time together, and endeavoured to console each other; but I did not confide to him the history of my adored Kora, lest he should inform my father; and if it got to his ears, complete ruin would ensue to all parties: for few

men equalled, and no man surpassed, the duke, in delicate points of honour.

We sent each day to inquire after my tyrant's health, and received no other answer than that she was well.

The dreaded morn arrived which was to complete my miseries, which was to separate me from the beloved object of my heart, to chain me to an ungovernable, haughty woman, to give freedom to my valued father. The last thought was my only consolation, and helped to support me to the altar.

The ceremony was to be performed in the chapel belonging to the palace, which was fitted up in a style of grandeur scarcely to be imagined. The great entrance, through which the procession was to pass, was covered with blue cloth, as well as the front aisle leading up to the altar; the chapel on all sides was covered with the same kind of cloth, studded with gold stars, forming a kind of drapery, the festoons of which were supported by golden doves,

doves, with an olive-leaf in the beak of each; and being brilliantly illuminated by large wax candles, in twelve silver chandeliers, formed the most glittering scene I ever beheld. The altar was covered with white, and loaded with the massy gold utensils belonging to the chapel.

I entered the grand avenue, supported by my father on one side, and Sebastian on the other, followed by an immense number of nobility, in splendid dresses, who all took their respective places. The king, who was to perform the part of father, was seated on one side the altar, and the queen on the other. As soon as his majesty saw we were all ready, he went, attended by some of his courtiers, to fetch the intended bride, who was in a closet adjoining the chapel. During this lapse of time, a voluntary was played on the organ, and I stood the most envied, and yet the most to be pitied, object of the group.

The loud swell of the organ died away,

and all eyes were turned to the door of the closet, from whence issued the most pleasing sight that painters ever fancied. Twelve beautiful nymphs, clad in white, with baskets in their hands, came first, strewing the path with flowers, and chanting an anthem composed for the occasion, the soft melody of whose voices seemed almost celestial. Isidora came next, led on by the king, and supported by donna Carletta on one side, and donna Elvira on the other. If ever a fine woman was assisted by dress, it was Isidora, for she had on a robe of silver net-work, the train of which was supported by six dukes' daughters. The robe was fastened round the waist with a girdle of diamonds, from which was suspended a large diamond cross. A bandeau of diamonds, with a plume of white ostrich feathers, composed her headdress, and a broad necklace of diamonds, which formed a kind of tippet, covered her bosom. There never was a dress so simply beautiful as this, and she
charmed

charmed all hearts but mine. A number of Spanish ladies, picked from the nobility, closed the train.

Isidora was placed at my right hand, and a dead silence ensued. I stood a prey to despair, with my desolated heart wandering back to my first marriage, when the voice of the archbishop of Toledo, beginning the awful ceremony, aroused my attention. He proceeded, without interruption, to the part where he said to the lady—"Wilt thou have this man for thy wedded husband?"

"No!" answered the lady.

The priest, confounded, repeated the question.

"No!" answered Isidora; "not this man—not Acasto, son to the duke of Andalusia, have I chosen, but Sebastian, his kinsman!"

The whole assembly started as if they had had but one nerve, amazement was depicted on every face, and Sebastian was not more composed than the rest. The

king knew not how to conduct himself; the poor priest stood speechless and trembling before them, till the queen, who, I believe, was the only one in the plot, spoke to him, and brought him back to his recollection, when the ceremony proceeded, and Isidora was united to the exulting Sebastian, while the poor, persecuted Acasto was left free—free to return to the wife of his bosom.

I never could conceal from Isidora my extreme indifference, and she took the strange method of mortifying me, by refusing my hand in the face of the nobility of Spain. My father felt the disappointment through every limb, and the whole country was engaged by this extraordinary topic, but I alone was satisfied.

In a few minutes after we had left the chapel, and retired to our own apartments, for we attempted not to follow the guests to the banquet, a page presented my father with a paper from the king, containing full liberty for the duke of Andalusia

lusia and his son to leave the palace. I need not tell you that we used dispatch, for my father thought every moment an age till we were out of it; and in less than ten minutes we mounted our mules, and turned our backs on the Escorial, where we had been treated with refined barbarity, and unexampled scorn.

The duke spoke little during our journey to the castle of Andalusia; the mortification he received was so great, I trembled for his health, and endeavoured to soften the affair by representing how unfit a woman Isidora was to call *him* father.

“True,” said he; “I should not have prided myself much in a daughter-in-law possessed of a heart like hers.”

I told my father I would present him with one he would glory in; and then informed him of my union with my magnanimous Kora, who had resigned me, the object of her affection, to release *him* from confinement.

“Glorious woman!” exclaimed the duke
—“unparalleled

—“unparalleled fortitude!—But how is this, my son—would you have married Isidora, having previously united yourself to another?”

“To secure the freedom of my father I would,” I replied.

“Mistaken boy!” said the duke, “would you have brought dishonour on my name? would you have left your angel wife to pine in secret?”

“On this condition only my Kora consented to live,” I answered.

“Sooner would I have died ten thousand deaths than this should have taken place!” said my father; “she must be more than mortal, and a son whose filial affection equals yours alone can be worthy of her. Ride on, for Andalusia will not rest till he acknowledges a daughter-in-law so much his superior.”

We stopped at our castle only while a vessel was preparing, which, in a few hours, we went on board, and crossed the Strait, landing

landing at the usual spot on the African coast.

I was thankful to see the change which had taken place in my father's mind; for the disinterestedness of Kora had given a check to the mortification he had received in the chapel of the Escorial. He did not fail to reprehend me for the rashness I was guilty of, in uniting myself to Alvaro's sister, at a time when I was betrothed to Isidora.

"I have nothing to offer in extenuation of my folly," I said, "but the irresistible charms of her I madly made my wife."

I sent some of the blacks, who constantly paraded the coast, forward, to desire their chief to meet me in the forest; and the rapidity with which I hastened on often occasioned the duke to remind me there was some difference between his age and mine. We had not advanced half through the forest ere I saw my friend, mounted on his favourite Achmet, who instantly alighted, when I felt myself in the warm grasp of friendship.

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The joy and consternation he expressed at seeing the duke were great; but I interrupted him, saying—"My wife—does she live? oh, if mercy is still an inhabitant of thy breast, tell me she is alive!"

"She is," he replied; "but how dare you come here, and ask the question, now you have given your hand to another?"

"My heart and hand are still Kora's," I answered.

He turned to the duke, saying—"Solve this enigma, my father, for Acasto seems incapable."

"It is a fact," said the duke; "and I am come to claim her as my daughter." He then informed Alvaro of the strange conduct of Isidora, whereby she released him from imprisonment, and me from the chains of a double marriage.

Alvaro said to my father—"Is my sister the wife of Acasto with honour?"

"She is, in the strictest sense of honour," my father answered; "and consequently she is the daughter-in-law of the duke

duke of Andalusia, and as such he is come to acknowledge her."

"I am satisfied," said Alvaro, taking my hand; "my sister shall not be withheld from the friend of my heart."

This was almost too much for me, and a tumult of rapture rushed through my veins; for I was apprehensive that Alvaro, owing to his extreme sense of honour, would not restore his sister to me so long as Isidora lived. I could not conduct myself with the least propriety, and Alvaro and my father frequently called me back, for they could not keep pace with the impatient delight which urged me on; they insisted on preceding me, to prepare Kora for my arrival, which was a precaution I had not the sense to think of. They entered the house first; but I could not resist the impulse of going to the garden of my beloved, and peeping through the lattice of her chamber, where I saw a sight enough to rob any man of his senses—I

saw

saw my Kora, with an infant at her breast, whom she was suckling!

You will recollect, I told you she was far advanced in pregnancy when I tore myself from her; but as Alvaro did not mention the child, I forbore to ask him about it, fearing an abortion had taken place, owing to the grief Kora was in when I left her. The last words she spoke to me were, a promise to try to live, and rear her then unborn infant, as became the child of her loved Acasto. How truly she had kept her word I had now an opportunity of seeing, for she held the child clasped close to her breast, with her eyes intently fixed on its little face, and with a deep sigh, said—"When wilt thou share a father's love?"

"*Now!*" said I, opening the lattice, and leaping through the window—"now will the child of my Kora have the love of its long-absent father!"

She shrieked, and fell lifeless into my arms. My ungovernable feelings had, for aught

aught I knew, deprived her of life, at a moment when I thought to live for her alone.

The door opened, when Leonetta entered, followed by Alvaro and my father. They heard the shriek, and came in hastily, guessing the cause. Leonetta flew to her daughter; my father took the child, and Alvaro, with a frown, attempted to drag me out of the room.—“No!” I exclaimed; “I am convinced I have killed her—I know my unrestrained passion has caused the death of your sister; but you, Alvaro, know not what it is to be a husband—you are a stranger to the feelings which made me commit this rash act—you know not what it is to first behold the infant of your fond affections; and sooner than leave the corpse of my loved Kora, I will sit and watch by it till it is reduced to the dust from which it sprang!”

“Let him remain,” said the duke; “I have been a father, and can guess his feelings.”

Leonetta,

Leonetta, with the assistance of Zamba, restored Kora to herself sooner than they hoped; and the sufferer opening her eyes, sighing, said—"Alas, mother, methought I saw Acasto!"

"My daughter must summon the fortitude I know her to be possessed of ere I can explain what it was she saw," replied Leonetta.

"Then my dear mother knows something she dare not communicate," said Kora; "but she may trust me now," taking the child out of Zamba's arms; "for with this pledge of Acasto's love, who looks up to me for nourishment, I can endure the worst. Speak—does my husband live?"

"He does," answered Leonetta; "and lives for thee alone."

"Is it possible? how can that be?" asked Kora.

"He has not been forced to marry the lady you resigned him to," replied her mother.

"Oh

“Oh Heavens, is that true? what is become of him? where is he? when shall I see him? will he return to his half-frantic Kora?” she demanded in a hurried tone.

“He will,” Leonetta observed, “as soon as you are able to bear the meeting.”

“Do not keep us one moment apart,” exclaimed Kora; “let me see him this instant: oh, why do you delay?”

“Be firm then,” said her mother, “and he shall be with you in a moment.”

My father and I had concealed ourselves behind a large flower-stand which was at the upper end of the chamber, and Leonetta led us forth, when I once more clasped my angelic wife. As soon as we were a little composed, she put the babe into my arms, saying—“Your son!”

It is impossible to make you understand what my feelings were, as I alternately embraced my wife and child.

My father, smiling, said—“As no one will introduce me, I am under the necessity of performing that ceremony for myself;”

self;" and taking the hand of Kora, added—“May an old man share the affection of Acasto's wife?”

“Who is this stranger?” asked Kora.

“My father,” I told her.

She attempted to kneel, but the duke prevented her, saying—“Not so, angelic, glorious woman! proud am I to add, the endearing title of daughter; for to thine unexampled fortitude and affection I owe my liberty and life, and what is still dearer to me, the happiness of my son. If Acasto had acted contrary to what he has done, and remained insensible to thy peerless beauty and virtue, he should never have called me father again.”

The duke joined our hands, saying—“Long, long may my children live, to be the delight of all their relatives!”

Kora's eyes glistened with a silent tear, but she did not speak, and taking the child from me, placed it in my father's arms.—“I understand the delicacy of your feelings,” said the duke; “this child is

the

the acknowledged heir of the house of Andalusia ; for this gift receive my thanks, for it has made me rich indeed."

Alvaro said—" My kind, generous friend, this condescension is greater than could be expected by any one, except those who are as well acquainted with the generosity of Andalusia as his adopted son is. I know not but extreme kindness wounds deeper than the most hardened scorn."

" Spoken just like my noble-spirited, youngest boy," said the duke ; " but I will have this child registered in due form, and all my estates secured to him, as heir to my son."

— We were almost too happy ; and Leonetta was no less pleased with the duke than he was with her. He asked how she contrived to prevent so beautiful a creature as her daughter from being stolen by the chiefs who surrounded her ?

" That action was left for your son to perform," answered Leonetta ; " for none
of

of our chiefs had courage enough to commit so great a theft."

My father proposed leaving us in a few days—"For," said he, "a soldier knows his duty to his sovereign, though a monarch may forget his duty to a soldier."

He confessed his time had not passed so agreeably for four-and-twenty years, but could not be persuaded to stay, and neglect his military avocations, notwithstanding he had been treated with such unexampled rigour by the royal family, but said he should do his duty, whether they did theirs or no, and in two days left us.—"Observe one thing," said my father on taking leave—"I shall not be glad to see any of my children at the castle of Andalusia."

We looked at him for an explanation, when he continued—"No, neither of my sons, nor my lovely, heroic daughter, nor yet my cherub grandson, the pride of my grey hairs, do I wish to see there, lest they meet with the troublesome companion
nion

nion in the brazen mask. Here, my children, you are safe, and here it is my wish you should remain."

Alvaro burst into a hearty laugh at the care the duke was taking of us, but could not alter his determination; and in bidding us adieu, my father said he knew not which possessed his affection most.

His absence not a little damped our felicity, and Leonetta particularly regretted it; for the duke and her possessed strong minds, with amiable dispositions, which rendered them fit companions for each other. I must say, with truth, we were the happiest family in the whole world, having nothing to wish for but the company of my father. He frequently sent Carlo to us with intelligence, and we as often sent Muley to him, with affectionate inquiries after his welfare; and we were not much surprised with news from the court of Spain respecting Sebastian and Isidora, who strove with equal resolution

for the mastery, and were equally determined to torment each other: ~~but~~ on Sixteen months rolled on in uninterrupted joy—delightful period of my existence! I was sitting in the alcove which was destroyed by a thunderbolt on the night of my marriage, which I had had rebuilt, with my Kora and my dimpled boy, when Alvaro entered, conducting a servant of my father's, and I was much surprised to find it was not Carlo, who had constantly been sent to us by the duke. The servant presented me a letter, which was in the handwriting of Carlo.

He informed me, my father was arrested by order of the queen, and conveyed to Madrid; that our castle was filled with soldiers; that he had sent me this intelligence by a trusty servant of our household, who was made acquainted with the subterraneous passage which led to the bastion beneath our castle; and that it was my father's wish I should remain on the African coast. Carlo added, he was determined

terminated to follow the fortunes of his old master, and set off after him, advising me to send back Martino to our castle, who would convey me what information he could gather.

Such was the blow I received at a time I looked not for it—at a time when I was in the height of my felicity. Alvaro, Leonetta, and my lovely wife, were equally afflicted with me, and at a loss to guess what crime could be imputed to the duke, whose conduct on all occasions had been irreproachable. I was dashed from the highest pinnacle of earthly bliss, to agonizing depths of misery.

We sent back Martino to Gibraltar. Alvaro summoned his troops, proposing to cross the Strait, to take possession of the castle of Andalusia by force, and expel the soldiery; but while we were debating what course to take, Martino returned with information from Carlo. He said, my marriage with Kora was known to the queen; that my father was arrested,

and accused of aiding and abetting his son to form an union with the niece of the queen, he being previously married to an African woman. Carlo further said, that her majesty and Isidora thought, as soon as they got possession of the duke, I should follow; but finding I did not appear, orders were issued for a great army to land on the African coast, to seize me, and convey me to Madrid; likewise, that several regiments were on their march to Gibraltar, where they were to embark for Africa.

Alvaro had scarcely time to arrange his troops, and place them on the defensive, ere the vessels of the Spaniards made their appearance. The Africans made a desperate resistance, but the numbers of the Spaniards overcame them so far as to effect a landing.

In the midst of all this confusion and distress, Kora exhorted us to be calm; but I saw, though she tried to conceal it, the

the inward agony of her soul shook her frame.

The Spaniards prepared to give us battle, arranging themselves accordingly: foe drew nearer to foe, when Alvaro and I perceived from an eminence, that a person was bound hand and foot, belonging to the Spaniards, being placed in the front of the battle, and it was no other—oh God! do I live to tell it?—it was no other than—my father!”

END OF VOL. I.

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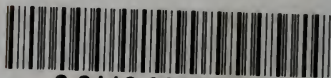
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